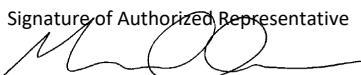


# BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

## For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address):  Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC 417 Pine Street Green Bay, WI 54301 (920) 940-0138	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, <a href="http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx">http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx</a> . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions.  Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: <b>March 17, 2022</b> at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. <b>Late applications will not be accepted.</b>
	Contact for further information: <a href="mailto:PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov">PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov</a>
	Date: March 17, 2022
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>	
<p><b>Applicant Certification:</b> In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>	
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print)  Mitchel Olson	Title  Chief Development Officer   General Counsel
	Phone (    )  920.940.0138
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date  March 17, 2022

## SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name  Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar)  \$2,201,826
Federal Employer Identification No.  20-0284635	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar)  \$6,605,479
Contact Name and Title  Mitchel Olson – Chief Development Officer   General Counsel	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar)  \$8,807,305
Telephone Number  920.940.0138	Project Name  R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Jackson County
E-mail Address(es)  mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.)  FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant  N/A	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other)  Middle-mile / Last-mile
Grant Manager Contact Name  N/A	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number  N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations  Jackson County 307 Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences)  The Jackson County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 153.3 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Jackson County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This project is “Open Access” allows for future expansion and encourages faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which supports immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed  1 Gbps`	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed  1 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location  200 mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location  200 mbps

<p>County or Counties served by this project</p> <p>Jackson County</p>	<p>Community or Communities served by this project</p> <p>Town of City Point, Village of Hixton, Town of Hixton, Town of Garden Valley, Town of Springfield, Village of Taylor, Town of Adams, Town of Knapp, Town of Cleveland, Town of Komensky, Town of Brockway, City of Black River Falls, Town of Millston, Town of Alma, Town of Albion, Town of Irving, Town of Franklin, Town of Melrose, Village of Melrose, Town of North Bend</p>
<p>List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve</p> <p>CenturyLink, Charter Communications, TDS, Tri-County Cooperative, NSight, US Cellular</p>	
<p>Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in <a href="#">Section 1.4</a> of the application instruction? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access).</p> <p>131</p>	<p>For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access).</p> <p>2,488</p>
<p>Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i>?</p> <p>99</p>	<p>Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i>?</p> <p>1,877</p>
<p>For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2021? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	

# FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

## Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

### Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Jackson County

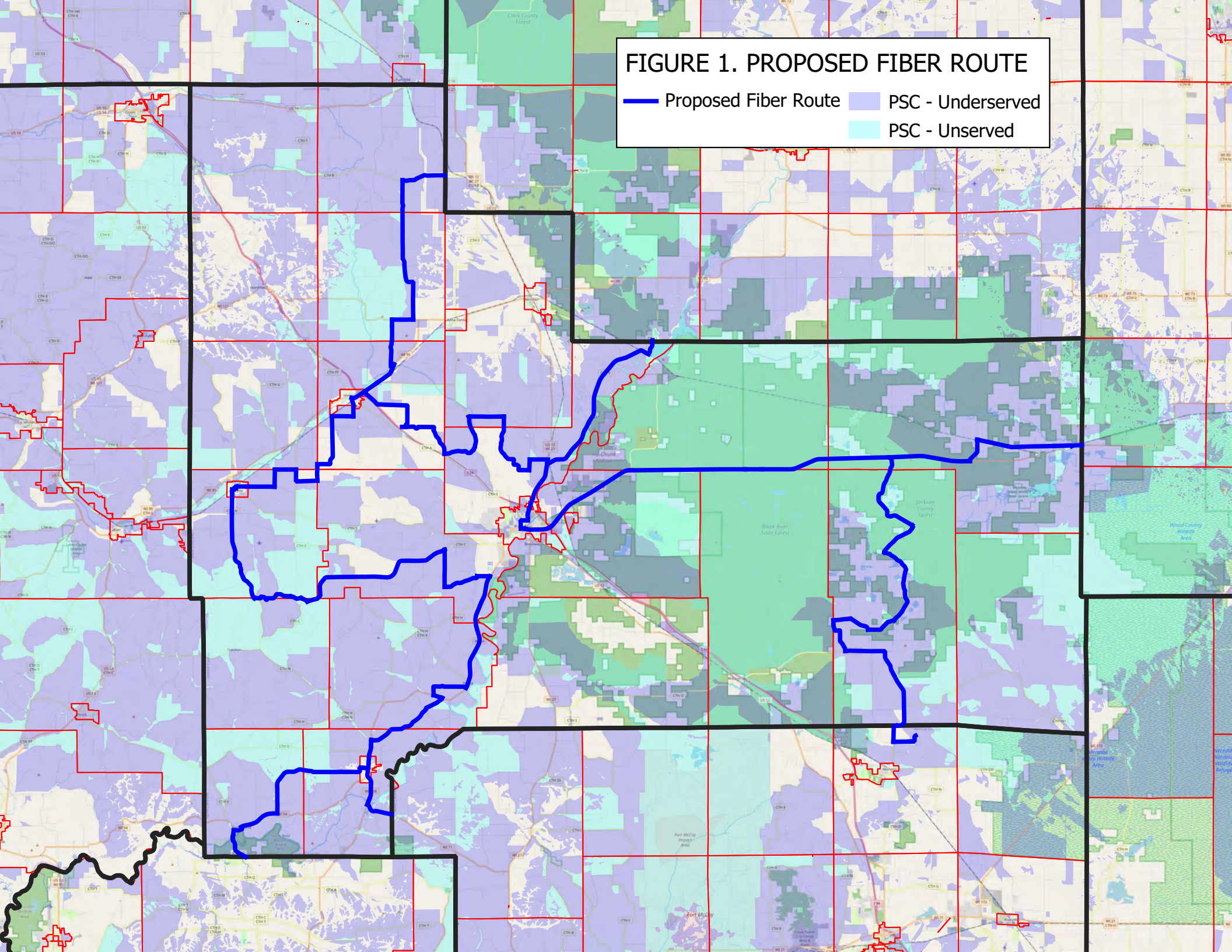
### Budget


Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 1,090,315.20	\$ 4,361,260.80	\$ 5,451,576.00
2	Equipment	\$ 150,160.00	\$ 600,640.00	\$ 750,800.00
3	Supplies	\$ 401,718.40	\$ 1,606,873.60	\$ 2,008,592.00
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 80,942.40	\$ 323,769.60	\$ 404,712.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$ 38,325.00	\$ 153,300.00	\$ 191,625.00
6	Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7	Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total:		\$ 1,761,461.00	\$ 7,045,844.00	\$ 8,807,305.00
80.0% match requested				

### Pledged Contributions

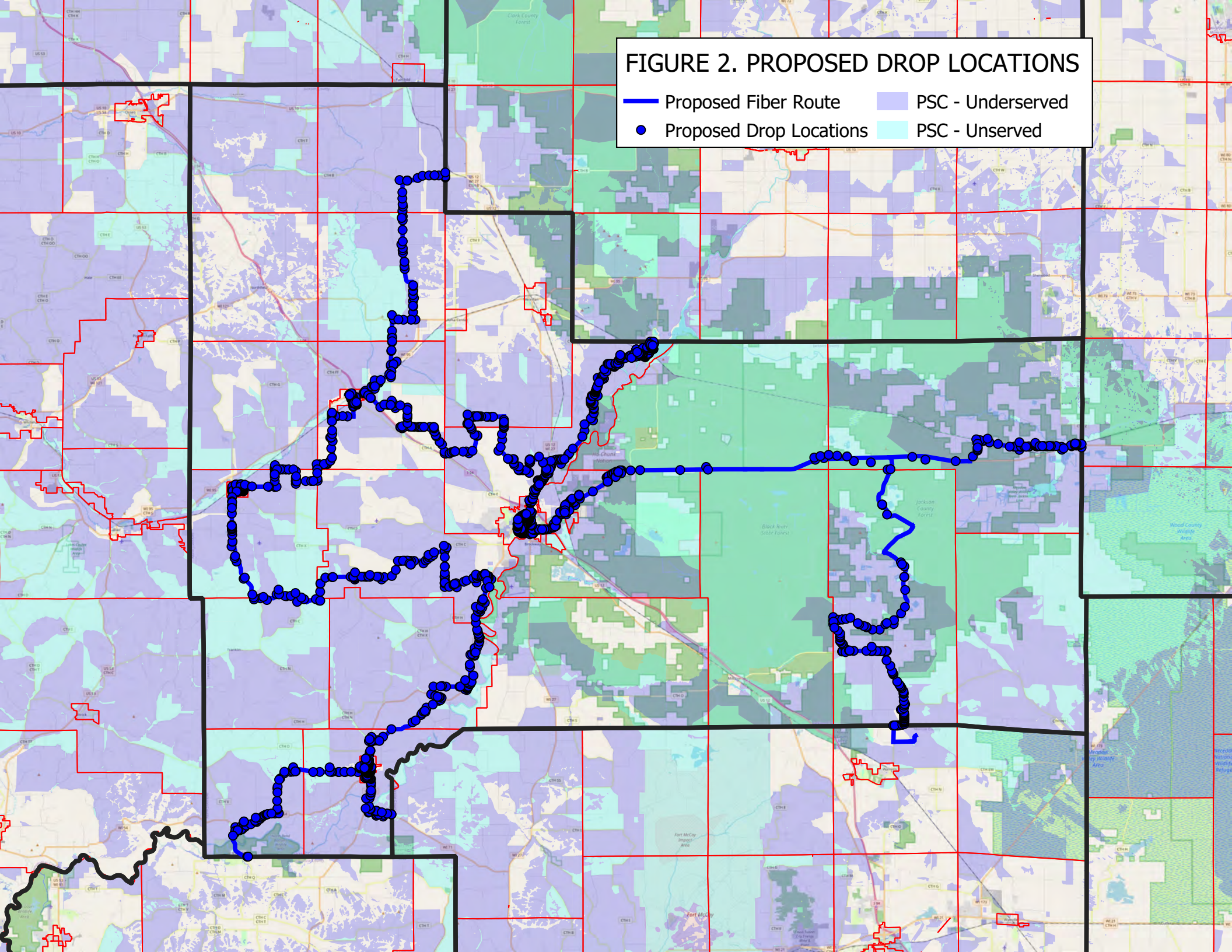
#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Bug Tussel Wireless / Jackson County - Partnership	Applicant	Cash	\$ 6,945,844.00
2	Jackson County	Partner	Cash	\$ 100,000.00
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 7,045,844.00

 Proposed Fiber Route
  PSC - Underserved  
 PSC - Unserved



 Proposed Fiber Route
  PSC - Underserved

 Proposed Drop Locations
  PSC - Unserved



### **3.2 Mandatory application requirements**

#### **3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information**

**a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.**

Name of Entity: Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC ("Bug Tussel")  
Mailing Address: 417 Pine Street  
Green Bay, WI 54701  
  
Contact: Mitchel Olson  
Title: Chief Development Officer | General Counsel  
Phone: 920.940.0138  
Email: mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com

**b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.**

Name of Entity: Jackson County  
Mailing Address: 307 Main Street  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
  
Contact: Mr. Ray Ransom  
Title: County Board Chair  
Phone: 715.284.0258  
Email: ray.ransom@co.jackson.wi.us

**c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).**

Hilbert Communications, LLC, and its subsidiary, Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC, are Wisconsin Limited Liability Companies, with their headquarters located at 417 Pine Street, Green Bay, WI 54701, and are Eligible applicants, as defined by §196.504(1)(ac)(1).

#### **3.2.2 Description of the project**

**a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.**

Please see the enclosed project maps, located on pages 5 and 6. The enclosed maps show the proposed middle-mile route throughout Jackson County, but the impact will be well beyond the route as shown. Future expansion projects, utilizing the middle-mile, will reach beyond the original territory served in this phase of deployment. With these additional projects, all of Jackson County will be affected by this project.

**b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.**

As shown in **Figures 1 and 2** above, there is a significant need for expanded broadband access in Jackson County. Outside of the largest population center, the City of Black River Falls, nearly the entire County is listed by the PSC as unserved or underserved.

Jackson County lacks the infrastructure, specifically a fiber optic middle mile, necessary for expanded FTTP access in the future, including in those census blocks designate as served, albethem few and far between.

**c. An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:**

This project will increase broadband access by making last-mile fiber to the premises connections, in addition to installing middle-mile fiber with substantial capacity for expansion.

This project will have the capacity to service the 2,488 households located along the fiber route, in addition to the 131 business. Of those, 1,877 homes and 99 businesses are in underserved and unserved areas.

The fiber to the premises packages available will include a symmetrical 200 mbps download / 200 mbps upload option for \$64.99, in addition to a 1 Gbps download / 1 Gbps upload option for \$99.99.

**d. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.**

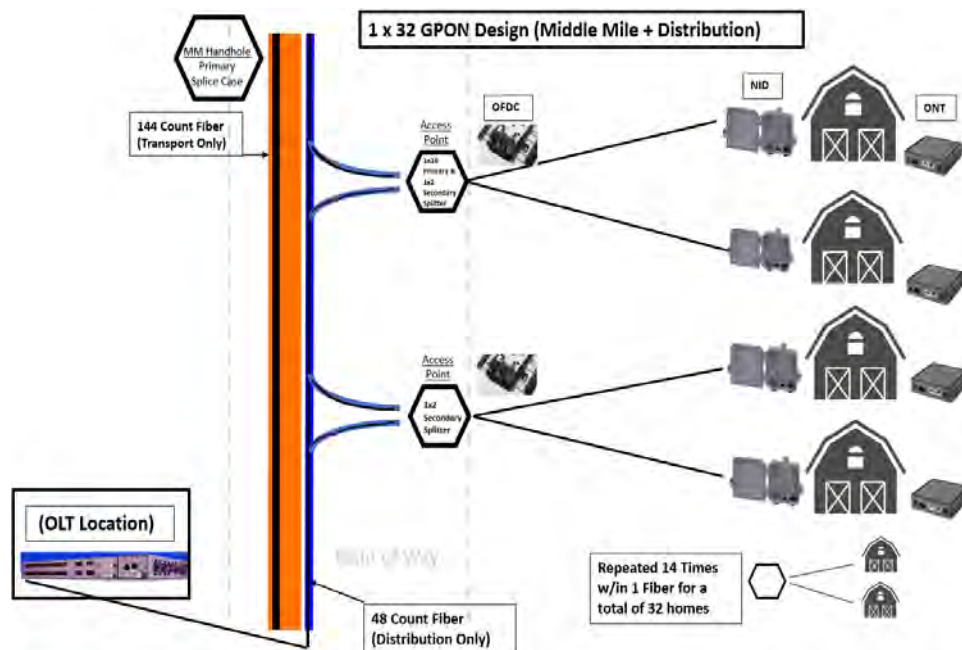
The proposed project will consist of both middle-mile and last-mile assets. The proposed project area is in significant need of additional backbone infrastructure and capacity, with last-mile connections being made along that route to promote a “dig-once” construction model.

**e. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.**

The network will consist of fiber optic cable connected to GPON/ONT electronics that will provide capacity for over 1 Gbps to each residence and business along the fiber route along with Dense Wave Division Multiplexing (DWDM) equipment for traffic aggregation, capable of supporting 200 to 800 Gbps.

As shown in Figure 3 below, a 144 strand transport fiber will be buried alongside a separate 48 strand fiber that will be utilized for fiber to the premises.

**Figure 3 – Middle-mile and Distribution Design.**



**f. For middle mile projects:**

At this time, no additional last-mile connections can be disclosed publicly. That said, Bug Tussel with itself be making last mile connections utilizing the middle-mile for transport.

Connections incident to this grant application will be made within the two-year construction window contemplated for this project, and additional last-mile projects will be completed, by both Bug Tussel and other internet service providers, in the years that follow.

By making the last-mile connections along the middle-mile route simultaneous to the installation of the middle-mile, it will not be necessary to perform additional construction projects along the same route. This conforms to the “dig-once” construction model, saving both time and construction expense.

**g. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.**

Final route design, in conjunction with Bug Tussel’s partners, and engineering will commence immediately following the announcement of the grant award. This process will last through the end of 2022, with construction beginning in early 2023. Construction of the main-line fiber is anticipated to be completed in June, 2023, with last-mile drops and installations beginning shortly thereafter. It is Bug Tussel’s expectation that the project with be completed by June, 2024.

### 3.2.3 Itemized Budget (all amounts should be rounded to the nearest dollar)

- a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures. The application should also indicate whether any facilities involved would be owned, rented, or leased.

At this time, Bug Tussel does not intend to purchase any equipment to facilitate construction pursuant to this grant application. All assets installed incident to this project will be owned and operated by Bug Tussel, or a related entity.

- b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers. For purposes of this grant program, subsidize means a contribution to the operating costs, including profit, of the telecommunications provider.

The sole purpose of the grant contemplated herein is to facilitate the construction of fiber assets. The grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of Bug Tussel, nor will it be used to subsidize the costs paid by customers.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application. Construction of broadband infrastructure may include any of the following:

Other than the work done in formulation of this grant application, no planning, engineering, permitting, or construction has taken place. All of the costs of this project, as identified on the enclosed budget, will be incurred during the performance period.

### 3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- a. **Matching funds.** A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. *Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.*

As discussed in Section b below, through the R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Program, and additional funding sources, Bug Tussel and its partner are pledging a total of \$6,605,479, or 75% of the total project cost.

- b. **Public-private partnerships.** If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement. If the partnership has not been reduced to a written agreement, provide a short description of the management role, financial commitment, or other contribution to the project for each participating partner.

To fund this project, Bug Tussel is utilizing a conduit bond issuance called the Rural Open Access Design (R.O.A.D.) to Digital Equality. In this public private partnership, the County's contribution to the project will take the form of an underlying guaranty on the bond issuance, and Bug Tussel will be responsible for all payments and costs associated with the project. Bug Tussel will own and operate all assets, and the county will benefit through free use of the fiber for governmental purposes for the lifetime of the bonds in addition to other financial considerations.

The creation of the public private partnership between Bug Tussel and Jackson County is shown by the bond issuance in December, 2021, as well as the support of the project, as shown in the March 14, 2022 Minutes of the Executive and Finance Committee Meeting (attached as **Exhibit A**). Moreover, Jackson County is contributing \$100,000 outside of the bond issuance, which further demonstrates their commitment to this project (Resolution authorizing contribution attached as **Exhibit B**).

**c. Existing broadband service. A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:**

The design of the project contemplated herein has given significant priority to areas avoided by existing internet service providers. Although the middle-mile route passes through areas with existing service, this is a necessary step to develop a reliable broadband network through the project area.

As shown on Table 1 below, several providers have some level of coverage in the project area. This coverage, however, is rarely, if ever, capable of reliably providing broadband service at speeds of 25 mbps download / 3 mbps upload. The services currently offered in the project area do not meet the needs of the residences and businesses in the project area, which is our sole motivator in undertaking this project.

**Table 1. Internet Service Providers.**

Service Provider	Technology Platform	Price Range	Advertised Download Speeds	Advertised Upload Speeds
CenturyLink	DSL	Unknown without service address	15 mbps	.75 mbps
Charter Communications	Cable	Unknown without service address	940 mbps	35 mbps
TDS	DSL	Unknown without service address	15 mbps	2.0 mbps
Tri-County Cooperative	Cable	Unknown without service address	50 mbps	5 mbps
NSight	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	0.7 mbps	0.4 mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	2.0 mbps	.064 mbps

Insofar as the middle-mile portion of this project is concerned, installation of the middle-mile pursuant to this project will substantially limit future construction costs related to additional last-mile projects. County governments, municipalities, commercial organizations, and economic development advocates have all identified the need for expanded middle-mile transport to meet current needs, anticipate future needs, and to promote economic development.

The design of the middle-mile route was done in cooperation with Jackson County, wherein County officials were able to provide first-hand knowledge of existing broadband assets. This information was utilized to avoid existing areas with adequate coverage if at all possible, while still accomplishing County objectives and allowing for the development of a robust middle-mile capable of serving all of the communities throughout Jackson County.

**d. Project impact. A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.**

This project will have a profound impact on broadband access in Jackson County. Of the 2,619 homes and businesses that will be able to immediately take service off the middle-mile fiber route, 1,976 are outside of metropolitan areas where broadband service is severely lacking, both in terms of access and affordability.

This expanded access will enable improvements in the lives of the residents of Jackson County by enabling remote work opportunities, improving access to educational opportunities, and enhancing access to medical services and information.

**e. Scalability. A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:**

Bug Tussel is undertaking a significant fiber-optic build out across Wisconsin, with proposed projects in more than 45 of the 72 counties. When completed, this will create a statewide, rural focused fiber optic network with as many as 60 redundancies between the end user and the destination of their data traffic.

For too long, networks have been designed on an ad hoc basis, connecting only those areas with significant enough population to allow for a quick return on investment. This has resulted in unreliable networks that travers through entire communities without making connections to the residents. Bug Tussel has designed networks that focus first on reliability and need, and has found that profitably follows closely when you put the community, and its residents, first.

The project contemplated herein, as part of the statewide network design, will have the capacity to serve significantly more than the 2619 homes and businesses first able to take service. There will be 7 network aggregation points along the middle-mile, allowing future projects to expand in every direction with the capacity to provide service for the totality of Jackson County, and beyond.

Bug Tussel is installing a 144 strand transport fiber as its middle-mile. Of those 144, 24 have been given to Jackson County through the public private \*partnership. Of the remaining 120 fibers, 48 fibers will be used for transport related FTTP, fixed wireless broadband, and cellular traffic, leaving 72 fibers, or one half of the installed assets, of additional capacity for future growth and expansion.

**f. Economic development. A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region. This description may be supplemented with a letter from one or more persons discussing the potential economic impact the project could have for that individual or business. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:**

Jackson County is considered a small-sized Wisconsin county based on a population of 21,145 (2020 US Census). However it ranks as the 15<sup>th</sup> largest county with 988 square miles, attesting to its rural nature. It is comprised of 22 towns, 5 villages and 1 city. Besides the city of Black River Falls (population 3,462), all municipalities are considered very rural in nature and experience the benefits of “small town” quality-of-life. The future sustainability of these rural communities is currently being challenged due to being unserved or underserved when it comes to broadband access at speeds of at least 25/3. The divide between communities with and without broadband has been realized and it will impact which communities thrive and which ones stagnate or slip into decline. In order to continue to retain population and grow economically, Jackson County must attract businesses and young families through economic development.

Numerous studies have shown that investment in infrastructure, in this case broadband, is a multiplier for economic development. Without high-speed broadband, it is well-documented and apparent that areas face significant disadvantages as compared to communities that are fortunate enough to offer it. According to a November 2020 report from [Forward Analytics](#), Jackson County ranks 71 out of 72 Wisconsin counties for percent of rural population with broadband access at various speeds.

The most recent Jackson County labor market information from the [Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development \(2020\)](#) is as follows:

Trade, Transportation and Utilities	25%
Education and Health Services	18%
Public Administration	16%

The two of the top three are employment sectors that were especially forced to transition employees to remote work, and some are still offering remote options for employees with access to high-speed broadband. In today’s economic environment, that means less travel and money spent on gas, and more money in the family checkbook. But if an employee lives in a rural unserved or underserved area of the county, that option is just not possible.

The Chairman of the *West Central Wisconsin SCORE* (Service Corps of Retired Executives) who lives in Jackson County, states in his letter of support: “In 2022 the COVID pandemic continues to hurt many small businesses. Many try to pivot to online sales and service only to be hindered by the lack of slow speed of the internet offerings here in Jackson County. Small businesses cannot grow and thrive in a 1950 infrastructure environment.”

Testimonials from two businesses with attached letters of support illustrate how faster speeds can benefit their business:

*Pheasant Ridge RV Campground:* Our marketing is only through the internet....this is how we are found by our customers throughout the U.S. Customers also have come to rely on the availability of internet for their own use as our location has spotty to no cell service. We try to provide limited free wi-fi at clubhouse for our seasonal members to use. We feel that without that amenity we would lose a great many customers.” Currently this business has access to only satellite internet with 12 mbps speeds and a monthly data cap. With higher speeds, they could serve more seasonal customers.

*Olson Farms:* “On our farm, we have 50-70 cows milking at all times and 60-70 steers. We have 420 acres that we cash crop. We are currently trying to implement more precision farming through GPS planting, spraying and combining. To do this, it would be very helpful to have a reliable internet source to download the set mapping from our GPS to our computer. It would also be beneficial having internet for uploading documents for crop insurance purposes, and USDA mapping. With a new dairy facility hopefully coming by Summer of 2022, we would like to be able to implement cow activity monitors to help monitor general herd health in which some systems require internet system. We would also like to have Wi-Fi cameras to monitor our calving maternity ward.” Faster, more reliable internet is critical for this farm be more efficient and profitable.

There is a direct relationship between high-speed Internet access and residential property values. We do not have local sales data for this lightly-populated area, so we cite national literature. From an article published pre-pandemic in [Applied Economics](#) in 2019: **“Results show that single-family homes with access to a 25 Mbps broadband connection have a price that is about \$5,977, or 3%, more than similar homes in neighborhoods with 1 Mbps. The rural premium is lower at \$5,099.”** *Post-pandemic, one may assume that 3% is a low estimate.*

Using Jackson County property records and assessed values from 2020, we ran a report on all residential and homestead property along the proposed middle mile route and within a 1500 foot service zone and came up with a value of \$279 million. A minimal 3% increase in value would add \$8.37 million to residential property value with consistent access to high-speed internet.

Perhaps most telling is this anecdotal information from local REALTOR *Steve Johnson* in his attached letter of support: “I can tell you that even before the COVID issue in 2020, there were buyers that would not buy a house (or even request a showing) if the property did not have internet where one could work remotely from home. As you can imagine, that has gotten worse as now more people are working remotely, requiring quality internet. This shows that quality internet also affects home values and the ability to sell your home. I have read that a home with good internet, increases the value of the home by up to \$10,000. Again, I am currently working with a couple that will not even look at a home unless it has high-speed internet as the wife works from home.”

An upgrade to true broadband speeds would benefit a telecommuting population. *Black River Country Country Bank President Bob Becker* (letter attached) offers the following from an employer perspective: “Employees working remotely are also presented with challenges when internet connections are unreliable, slow, intermittent, or simply don’t work. When internet is good, productivity and morale is high, work routines and communications can be conducted in a regular fashion. With poor internet service, working from home is difficult to do, as employees are not able to ....access information necessary to complete their work or connect with their co-workers. Frustrations can run high, thus a loss in productivity and decreased morale, and which ultimately could affect employee satisfaction, job performance and retention.”

*Michelle & Paul Murray* describe the situation as employees: “My current internet situation is that we use our cell phones as ‘hotspots’ when we are home. I am unable to reliably use that when nearing data limits even though we have an unlimited data plan. Working at home due to COVID presented a challenge and I was unable to remote into my work site from home due to very slow, or no connectivity. To be able to work remotely is not an option for either my spouse or myself at this time.”

**g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas. A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.**

This project is about open-access expansion. In addition to compromising their reliability for the sake of profits, ad hoc networks that focus on dense, isolated population areas have a detrimental effect on future development.

Bug Tussel’s middle-mile/last-mile fiber will allow immediate access to those along the route, and it was designed not with dense population areas as the prime motivator. This will facilitate further development, by Bug Tussel and other competing broadband service providers, by greatly reducing the cost to serve even the most remote customers.

**3.2.5 Other information supporting the application**

**a. A description of applicant’s history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.**

As a growth oriented company with a statewide footprint, Bug Tussel has a long history of undertaking projects of this magnitude.

Through the PSC, Hilbert Communications, and its subsidiaries, have been awarded a number of grants, as shown on Table 2 below. All projects have been completed, or are in the process of being completed, within the parameters outlined in each respective grant application:

**Table 2. Grant Awards.**

Grant	Year	Technology	Status	Customers
Oneida County - I	2015	Fixed Wireless	Completed	199
Oneida County – II	2017	Fixed Wireless	Completed	256
Florence County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	42
Oneida County – III	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	179

Juneau County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	25
Green County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	93
Oneida County – IV	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	169
LaFayette County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	24
Green Lake County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	31
Town of Deerfield	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	7
Oneida County – V	2019	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Menominee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2020	Fixed Wireless / Fiber	Pending	Pending
Green County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Iowa County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Florence County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Fond du Lac County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Iron County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County – SW	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2021	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2022	Fiber	Pending	Pending

Bug Tussel completed a number of American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Access Grant applications that were not awarded, and four of those projects will commence irrespective of the grant award. Construction on fiber-optic networks in Marathon, Waushara, Calumet, and Fond du Lac Counties will begin this spring.

**b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.**

The project area is one where legacy providers have not continued to make the investments necessary to support modern technological advancement. As discussed above, existing access exists only in areas where profitability facilitated the investment, which leaves large geographic tracts throughout Jackson County with little to no broadband access.

This necessitates the installation of a middle-mile, from which future expansions efforts can grow. The existing middle-mile infrastructure, in addition to being sparse, was not installed to facilitate widespread FTTP. The middle-mile contemplated here reaches far into the corners of the county, enabling low cost projects to make last mile connections.

**c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project. This may include information such as the number of years the company has been in operation, documentation of successful completion of similar infrastructure projects, evidence that sufficient funds are available to cover project expenditure and match, customer turn-over rates, and credit rating.**

Bug Tussel Wireless was founded in 2003, and in 2008 joined forces with McKinley Reserve and Paul Gehl to form Hilbert Communications through a merger of seven companies. With the goal to remedy the dire need for broadband and cellular access of those living in rural communities, Bug Tussel has grown substantially in its nearly 20 year history.

The core investment group has made investments in rural wireless and broadband in excess of \$30 million and is currently completing a series of financing agreements to fund over \$500,000,000 of new capital projects through a number of joint ventures with private equity firms and public bond issuances. Consolidated revenues per Hilbert's most recent audited financial statements is nearly \$65,000,000, a doubling year on year increase.

Bug Tussel has a proven track record of operating, maintaining, and continually investing in its network to provide its thousands of rural customers with the best technologies on the market. Collaborating with partners like AT&T, Bug Tussel currently operates approximately 600 broadband and cellular sites throughout rural Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa. Further, Bug Tussel has a rapidly expanding fiber footprint with existing fiber assets in Forest and Oconto Counties, as well as ongoing projects in Iowa, Green, Kewaunee, Marathon, Forest, Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Waushara Counties all set to be completed in 2022.

Bug Tussel and its subsidiaries can provide turnkey solutions for nearly any rural community. From site acquisition, tower construction, network operations, and sales and service, Bug Tussel can connect rural communities and keep residents competitive with larger urban centers.

Bug Tussel has been very deliberate in its network design creating significant redundancies through the use of "ring design" and a combination of over the air and fiberoptic connectivity resulting in industry high performance standards. This design and reputation resulted in the award of construction and operational contracts with AT&T for a portion of the FirstNet® National Emergency Communications Network. Bug Tussel brings the same reliability and redundancy design to an individual customer in rural Wisconsin as it does to a national emergency communications network.

Bug Tussel also believes that networks need to be sustainable and as such cannot be reliant on future grants or funding but must seek creative ways in rural markets to leverage assets. This application and our entire network leverages assets and relationships to create a superior network. Bug Tussel is in the final stages of a national build agreement with AT&T, with nearly 350 sites completed across Wisconsin and southwestern Iowa that also provides a basis for our broadband network and makes broadband possible on AT&T's network. Since 2018, Bug Tussel has ramped its site acquisition and construction teams from 2 to 4 sites per month to up to 20 sites per month and has completed nearly 200 sites in a single year. These sites met the stringent quality standards of FirstNet and of AT&T. They also met our own stringent quality standards for each rural customer.

**d. For middle mile projects, state the terms under which the applicant will make its middle mile fiber resource available to last mile providers. Without disclosing project-specific or customer-specific negotiated rates for service or access, state whether access to the middle mile fiber resource will be offered to last mile providers at a rate that is reasonable and common to the industry. Describe any restrictions or limits that may limit the availability or interconnection with the middle mile route.**

Bug Tussel's network is open to all providers, and we believe that by strategically placing the fiber in unserved or underserved areas and opening the DWDM network to other providers, that the speed of deployment for other providers who may want to use our fiber for backhaul, temporarily or permanently until their construction plans catch up, will be positively impacted.

The rates Bug Tussel intends to charge will be reasonable, and will include shorter-term lease agreements, longer-term IRUs, and fiber swap agreements. By including 7 access points throughout the middle-mile route, the capacity available for expansion will be easily accessible to any and all who may have an interest.

**e. For middle mile routes, state the amount of fiber capacity, by number of fiber strands in a cable, that the applicant has been reserved for public use. Describe any commitment or tentative discussion indicating the local government or State agency that might use those fiber strands, and for what purpose. Describe any restrictions or limits that may limit the public use (e.g. a possible use conflicts with an existing program covering the same subject matter).**

Through Bug Tussel's public private partnership with Jackson County, 24 dark fiber strands are reserved for the County at no cost. This commitment to free access for Jackson County is contracted for 30 years.

Moreover, Bug Tussel engaged with Jackson County in the planning stages of this grant application to design a network that accomplishes numerous County objectives, better allowing the County to utilize the fiber they are given.

**f. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.**

Black River Memorial Hospital is the only in-patient comprehensive healthcare facility in Jackson County. In addition to telehealth appointments, in its attached letter of support it indicated it has dedicated clinicians that travel to patient's homes that require post-hospital, palliative and Hospice care. These clinicians need higher speed broadband to be effective and efficient to deliver the excellent care patients deserve. Providing this type of care in-home reduces complications and avoids costly re-hospitalization.

Marshfield Clinic Health System has provided over 400,000 telehealth visits in the past 2 years. It serves patients in the project area at its clinics and hospital in Eau Claire. In its attached letter of support, it likewise noted that telehealth appointments demand a high-speed connection, and this project addresses a significant area of broadband deficiency in its service area.

Tri-County Hospital in Whitehall also offers telemedicine appointments to its patients in southwest Jackson County, linking with specialists in La Crosse and Onalaska.

National studies provide evidence of cost savings with the use of telehealth services. In a pre-COVID-19 study of 40,000 Cigna beneficiaries, the 20,000 beneficiaries who used the MDLive telehealth platform had 17% lower costs when compared with non-virtual care. Virtual care users also experienced a 36% net reduction in ED use per 1,000 people compared to non-virtual care users ([Healthcare IT News](#)). The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) [Report of the Taskforce on Telehealth Policy](#) discusses a variety of evidence that the use of telehealth services lowers the overall cost of care. We are confident that this national data can be extrapolated to this project area. Considering that in-person health care services are 20 or more miles away for residents of the Towns of Curran and Northfield, use of telehealth also results in savings related to travel and time away from work or school.

Telehealth challenges faced by Jackson County residents are illustrated in an attached letter of support from Darrel Stoen: "If anyone else in my house tries to use the internet during a video conference, the video conference completely shuts down. This has been the case during virtual healthcare visits with my physician!"

**g. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.**

The majority of Jackson County's 988 square miles is served by six K-12 school districts: Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan, Black River Falls, Blair-Taylor, Osseo-Fairchild, Melrose-Mindoro and Whitehall. Together they serve 5,139 K-12 students. However, all districts except Black River Falls (1593 students) and Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan (580 students) have a majority of their students residing in adjacent counties. In addition, two additional school districts (Pittsville and Tomah) cover Towns with a large geography but very few residents.

At the start of the pandemic, each Jackson County School District distributed hotspots to families. However, even with that assistance, some families simply had an inability to get reliable internet where they lived. Students at Chippewa Valley Technical College and Western Technical College had similar struggles, as did teachers at all levels of the educational system. Stories abound of students in school parking lots or fast-food parking lots accessing wi-fi to participate in education.

Since this is a 154 mile middle mile project, the only way to confidently report the number of students to be served would be via a door-to-door survey, which is not currently practical. So, we estimate approximately 5% of the Black River Falls and Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan K-12 student population (108 students) and 2% of the other four districts K-12 student population (59 students) live along this route for an estimated total of 167 K-12 students served by this project. Western Technical College reports that 211 students live in Jackson County. Using the 5% formula, we estimate approximately 10 Technical College students live along the route and would benefit.

There are many online educational programs currently available for students of all ages in the project area. Several school districts have on-line learning labs, where a student can be physically located in their high school but take a class for college credit. While K-12 schools have largely returned to in-person instruction, some families prefer an on-line option. With improved internet access, families in the project area may wish to open-enroll in accredited online schools such as Acellus Academy, Virtual Charter Schools, or the Wisconsin Connections Academy. Western Technical College offers 16 programs totally on-line, as well as “Flexible Learning Options” which combine in-person and online instruction. Chippewa Valley Technical College offers 14 programs totally online, as well as 10 programs as “MyChoice” with the best of both face-to-face and online courses. All University of Wisconsin campuses, as well as most private colleges and universities, offer online classes and degrees that can be accessed with a high-speed connection.

Adult professional continuing education has made a major shift to online course delivery, and will be aided by this project. Rural health care providers at all levels, from nursing assistants to sub-specialty physicians, REALTORS, HVAC technicians, accountants, firefighters, childcare providers and others need access to highspeed internet for continuing education to maintain credentials and improve skills.

While student learning is of paramount importance, the ability of teachers to teach those students is also a consideration.

From a kindergarten teacher: “I was expected to teach reading and math lessons virtually every single day for an hour and then be available via email throughout the rest of the day. Since we don’t have internet at home, I was having to pack up my son and drive 20 minutes every day so I could use my parents internet. We do have internet on our phones but it isn’t fast enough or reliable enough to count on to reach all of my students. Even before the pandemic, and as things get back to normal, not having internet at home causes stress because I can’t work from home at all meaning I have to go into work on the weekends just so I can access the online materials and prep for the week. Being able to work on my computer in the evenings would save me from having to stay late at school or from having to go in on weekends.”

From an instructor at Western Technical College: “I need for my students to have access to reliable high-speed internet to complete their classes. The biggest frustration has been that students attending synchronized classes cannot leave their video up while trying to listen to the audio as well as viewing any electronic presentation because their internet service is too slow. My frustration is that first year students need to develop a relationship with the Instructor to be fully successful in an already stressful circumstances. That can only happen when I can see their faces and tell whether what I am doing is engaging. The success of our students is dependent on this grant. Please don’t let us down.”

**h. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:**

This project is the result of a true partnership between Bug Tussel and Jackson County. From planning and design forward, Bug Tussel and the County have been engaged, and will continue to be engaged to complete the shared goal of expanded broadband access throughout Jackson County.

Moreover, Bug Tussel will continue to partner with Jackson County following the completion of the construction project. Bug Tussel works diligently to level the playing field so that rural areas can utilize the same types of services as urbanized areas and therefore able to fully compete economically and socially to attract and retain residents and businesses. Through its community outreach component, Bug Tussel University, Bug Tussel will work with Jackson County to provide educational seminars ranging from basic classes (“How to use the internet” and “How to use social media”) to more advanced curriculum. Bug Tussel University personnel are always very engaged in the communities in which Bug Tussel operates, seeking user feedback on ways to assist them in connecting technology and the community.

**i. Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.**

We have received a total of 35 letters of support for this project. Due to page limitations, a curated comments page has been prepared (attached as **Exhibit C**). The remainder Letters of Support from schools, government officials, health care institutions, and residents that will benefit from this project, are collectively attached as **Exhibit D**, the first ten of which have been identified.

## **EXHIBIT LIST**

- A. Executive and Finance Meeting Minutes**
- B. Resolution 02-01-2022 – Authorizing Broadband Matching Funds from American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Broadband Expansion in Towns/Village Located in Jackson County**
- C. Curated Comments**
- D. Letters of Support**
  - a. Senator Patrick Testin;**
  - b. Children’s Wisconsin;**
  - c. Marshfield Clinic Health System;**
  - d. Chippewa Valley Technical College;**
  - e. Western Technical College;**
  - f. School District of Pittsville;**
  - g. School District of Black River Falls;**
  - h. Melrose-Mindoro School District;**
  - i. Oakdale Electric Cooperative; and**
  - j. Co-op Credit Union.**

## Executive & Finance Meeting – March 14, 2022

Members Present: Ray Ransom, Ron Carney, Jeff Amo, Roger Stevens, Karen Thayer.

Other in attendance: Susie Meinerz, Gaylord Olson, Chris Hovell, Rick Poff, Marianne Torkelson, Angie Shafer, Adam Olson, Duane Waldera, Carly Keller, Pheng Lee, Randy Bjerke, Jodee Brooks and Cindy Altman.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Ransom at 9:00 a.m.

Next meeting date will be April 11, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

County Board Minutes: Approved in February.

### Proclamations

- a. April 2022 as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Motion Stevens/Carney to approve. Approved.
- b. Women in History Proclamation. Motion Carney/Amo to approve. Approved.

### Resolutions:

- a. Approval of the Jackson County Land and Water Resource Management Plan Revisions. Motion Carney/Thayer to approve. Approved.
- b. Addition of one (1) FTE Community Health Worker (CHW) position. Motion Stevens/Carney to approve. Approved.
- c. Creation of one (1.0) additional FTE Economic Support Specialist. Motion Carney/Thayer to approve. Approved.
- d. Addition of one (1) FTE Dementia Care Specialist – Caregiver Coordinator (DCS-CC) position. Motion Amo/Stevens to approve. Approved.
- e. Addition of one (.80) FTE Administrative Clerk. Motion Stevens/Thayer to approve. Approved.
- f. Establishing Total Annual Compensation for Sheriff and Clerk of Court Pursuant to Wis. Stats. 59.22. Motion Thayer/Amo to approve the amended Resolution with the Clerk of Court having a 3% increase each year, contingent on Personal & Bargaining approval. Approved. Motion Amo/Stevens to adopt the amended motion. Approved.
- g. Extension Summer Intern Funding. Motion Stevens/Thayer to approve. Approved.
- h. Interim Zoning Administrator. Motion Amo/Carney to approve, contingent on Personal & Bargaining and Zoning approval. Approved.

### Animal Shelter Update

- a. Discuss/Act Shelter Manager Project Employee Job Description. Motion Amo/Carney to approve amended description with law enforcement certification to be preferred, not required. Approved.

**Discuss/Act on partnership with JC Childcare Task Force for Workforce Innovation Grants:** Marianne Torkelson, on behalf of the Jackson County Childcare Network, presented a proposal for a partnership with Jackson County to apply for childcare grants. Jackson County would only act as the fiduciary for the grant funds. Corporation Counsel Bach's written recommendation was read. Motion Amo/Carney to approve provided an agreement can be reached. Approved.

**Corporation Counsel Report:** Sam Bach provided a written report.

**Report from Department:** IT, VSO, Court System, Medical Examiner: Pheng Lee provided a written and verbal report. Randy Bjerke provided a written and verbal report.

**Strategic Planning Updates:** A new individual with CEDA is working on marketing the Highway campus. Broadband moving forward with a 3/17 grant deadline.

### Discuss/Act American Rescue Plan Funds:

- a. US Cellular matching funds (\$25,000). Motion Stevens/Amo that Jackson County supports and approves matching funds of \$25,000 provided US Cellular makes a successful grant application for Broadband in Jackson County. Approved.
- b. Hilbert Communications LLC and its subsidiaries. Motion Amo/Carney providing Jackson County support for the grant application of Hilbert Communications LLC and its subsidiaries. Approved.
- c. BRF Rentals – air conditioning units (\$24,000). Motion Carney/Thayer to deny. Approved.

**Discuss/Act State of Emergency Declaration:** Motion Amo/Stevens to declare an end to the State of Emergency effective April 1, 2022. Approved.

**Seminar Request:** None

**Financial Updates:** Year End Updates. Motion Thayer/Stevens to approve Budget Entry. Approved.

**Audit Bills and Line-Item Transfers:** Motion Carney/Stevens to approve the bills. Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 am.

ORIGINAL

RESOLUTION 02-01-2022

**RE: AUTHORIZING BROADBAND MATCHING FUNDS FROM AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION IN TOWNS/VILLAGES LOCATED IN JACKSON COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, Various providers desire to commence projects consisting of the construction and operation of certain wireless and fiber optic communications services to provide the most advanced infrastructure to unserved and underserved residents in multiple Towns/Villages in Jackson County; and

**WHEREAS**, The Jackson County Board in recognition of the broadband underserved areas of its community, seeks to enter into a quasi-public/private venture to obtain, maintain and increase broadband coverage for the support of education, health care, growth of business, retention of existing business, tourism promotion, and overall economic vitality and sustainability; and

**WHEREAS**, The Jackson County Board desires to support Broadband Grants offered by and through the State of Wisconsin and Federal Entities; and

**WHEREAS**, Various providers are willing and able to partner with the Jackson County Board, Jackson County Towns and Jackson County Villages to provide the latest advancements in broadband coverage and to seek all available grants to provide and subsidize the cost of necessary broadband infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, The Jackson County Board desires to pursue and make application for any and all grant money available for broadband coverage with the assistance of these providers; and

**WHEREAS**, The Jackson County Board had previously approved providing matching funds in the amount of \$1,000,000 for an ARPA Broadband Access Grant in partnership with Bug Tussel Wireless which was not approved;

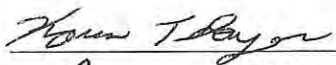
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Jackson County Board authorizes and supports the application by Towns/Villages to the State of Wisconsin and Federal entities for Broadband grants in partnership with various providers; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Jackson County Board will return the \$1,000,000 previously earmarked for the ARPA Broadband Access Grant, which was not approved, to the ARPA restricted fund; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Jackson County Board will, upon approval of any grant application greater than \$1,000,000, provide matching funds in the amount of \$100,000 to said Town/Village, up to \$1,000,000.

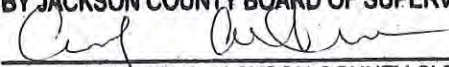
Executive & Finance Committee

  
Ryan E. Ginner  


  
Ryan A. Stein  
I HEREBY CERTIFY

RESOLUTION # 02-01-2022

WAS ADOPTED ON 11/17/22  
BY JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

  
CINDY ALTMAN, JACKSON COUNTY CLERK

YES 18 NO 0

Absent: 1

## **R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Jackson County Curated Comments**

Except within the city limits of Black River Falls, the vast majority of Jackson County municipalities are rural and unserved/underserved for broadband, ranking 71 out of 72 Wisconsin counties. Local residents are calling for digital equity with urban and suburban areas as evidenced by 35 letters of support; all are attached at the end of the application. Following are curated high-lites, with an emphasis on economic development, education and telehealth.

Co-op Credit Union – “We cannot stress enough how reliable, fast internet connectivity is for our rural communities and their continued success and growth. Our residents and businesses rely on it to keep up safe, facilitate learning and preserve natural resources.....

Steve Johnson, REALTOR – “I can tell you that even before the COVID issue in 2020, there were buyers that would not buy a house (or even request a showing) if the property did not have internet where one could work remotely from home..... This shows that quality internet also affects home values and the ability to sell your home.”

Woodworkers’ Tool Works – “Our customers are nationwide as well as international. We are the only tooling manufacturer to offer 24 hour service which is only possible through the use of the internet.”

7 Rivers Alliance – “As we move into recovery, the challenge of attracting a workforce to our region and state has become even more difficult as we struggle to find workers. On the quality of scale, our region – and Jackson County - scores high, making it a very attractive place to live and raise a family. But we cannot attract families to live here without having broadband.”

School District of Black River Falls – “This grant opportunity provides Jackson County with the possibility to overcome a significant hurdle in our rural area.”

Melrose-Mindoro School District – “Eighty-three percent of families without access (to internet) report that it was due to availability, not affordability. The ARPA Broadband Access Grant gives Melrose-Mindoro students a greater opportunity for an equitable education beyond the pandemic.”

Reva Witte, mother of a kindergartner - Once we got her connected for virtual learning, we continually heard her teacher say, “Harper, you’re frozen.” As if transitioning to virtual wasn’t hard enough on a 5-year-old. She was longing to participate, but her actions and voice went unnoticed by her teacher or were so delayed that they were a disruption for others in the class.

Kara Wense – So much time is wasted as we sit and wait for assignments to load either to be completed or graded; videos to load so they can buffer and be viewed, then buffer some more, or assignments to be posted all due to our internet being throttled after using our satellite allotment.”

Western Technical College (WTC) – “The more our students and customers have access to broadband, the more we will be able to help them, and the easier it will be to deliver high-quality classes and products.”

WTC Instructor Michael McArdle – “I need for my students to have access to reliable high-speed internet to complete their classes. The success of our students is dependent on this grant. Please don’t let us down.”

Black River Memorial Hospital and Marshfield Clinic Health System each provided compelling evidence for accelerated use of telehealth care in letters of support that are attached.

Jay Severance - The need for fast, reliable broadband internet is a required infrastructure for living and working in today’s world. The private sector does not see a profit to providing it to rural areas. Just like the rural electrification of the 1930’s, government assistance is required.

Examples of comments from Residents: “I/my husband/my wife requires the internet for work”; “we have tried several providers and can’t obtain broadband speed”; “I lost a job opportunity that required an upload of 5 mbps or more”; Residents told stories of the difficulties with remote learning. Overwhelmingly, they want broadband for the future generation to be successful.



**PATRICK TESTIN**  
STATE SENATOR

March 8, 2022

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Public Service Commission of Wisconsin Officials,

Jackson County ranks near the bottom of Wisconsin counties in rural broadband access according to data cited in a November 2020 report from Forward Analytics. That is why I am urging you to approve the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project - a middle mile project proposed by Jackson County and Bug Tussel Wireless.

This project would bring fiber to nearly 2,000 homes and businesses in Jackson County. People in every industry depend on reliable connections, and this will continue our efforts to bridge the opportunity gap for residents of Jackson County.

Bug Tussel has proven its reliability to the PSC in the past, and Jackson County has a demonstrable need for more high speed internet access; I ask for your approval for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Testin', written in a cursive style.

Patrick Testin  
WI State Senator,  
Senate District 24



March 4, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto,  
Division Administrator  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project.

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service and the rural areas of Jackson County lack this important infrastructure. Children's Wisconsin currently serves in the neighborhood of 100 families in the Jackson County area, and many more that span multiple counties surrounding Jackson County, with a fair estimate based on average family size exceeding 425 people and growing daily.

Jackson County is primarily rural, with great distances between towns, schools, and other necessary services. Due to the fact that our area is rural, many residences and business are starved of adequate internet service or speed to compete in a global market, due to lack of service, poor line of sight, and many other debilitating factors. Many people are now expected to work and study from home and are unable to meet their commitments in doing so. Our agency works directly with families and are impacted severely with slower speeds such as dropped calls, and frozen video screens. Speeds are so varied and unpredictable that studying at home is a major issue for families who are continuing their education and for their children who are expected to keep up with their teachers and peers for their basic education. If this proposal is funded, better access will improve the lives and well-being of those we serve by creating opportunities to give the residents of Jackson County a competitive leg up and opening up endless possibilities for the students, businesses, and families who live here and keep Wisconsin moving forward. Our current access is actually moving all of us in this area backwards, from leaving children behind in their education, to housing developments which are already in scarce supply. Without sufficient broadband, we will be unable to produce results that are desperately needed for Jackson County residents to succeed and to be healthy and safe in school and have quality homes to go to so they can study and work. Rural areas deserve digital equity with their urban and suburban peers!

Again, I fully support the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 716-660-0842 or [dconant@chw.org](mailto:dconant@chw.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Daniel Conant  
Family Resource Specialist  
Children's Wisconsin



# Marshfield Clinic Health System

**Marshfield Medical Center**  
1000 North Oak Avenue  
Marshfield, WI 54449

March 10, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53707-9100

Re: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Middle Mile Broadband Expansion Grant proposal

Marshfield Clinic is an integrated health system located in Marshfield, WI serving central, north-central and north-western Wisconsin, this includes patients who reside in Jackson County. We are a Mission, Vision and Value's driven organization that strives to "Enrich the Lives of those we serve". MCHS has used Telehealth to reach unserved and underserved populations throughout Wisconsin since 1997.

MCHS is supportive of the efforts of this proposed project in Jackson County and offer this letter of support for their grant application. This project will expand broadband and increase resiliency in the Jackson County Market.

Over the course of the last 6 years, MCHS has worked closely with the communities we serve in an effort to help them prepare for a time in which more healthcare can be delivered using technology directly into the patient's home. The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the move to delivering care via telehealth much more quickly than expected. However, Telehealth was able to respond quickly and offer continued access to healthcare services by our patients throughout the Pandemic. Since March of 2020, MCHS has completed over 400,000 telehealth encounters that were not permissible prior to the Pandemic. Despite the rapid advancement of Telehealth, access to broadband internet services continue to be our patient's top barrier in accessing these services.

Looking forward to a Post-COVID world, Telehealth is not going away. Federal legislation is expected to make these new flexibilities to use telehealth permanent. Telehealth visits allow patients better access to healthcare without the need to travel or miss work or school. This allows patients to more conveniently maintain their chronic illness appointments, have a visit with their Primary Care Doctor or complete needed follow-up care. A number of new services are likely to join the array of telehealth services already offered by health systems across the country. A patient's access to broadband at home will be a determining factor in which services they can consume and which they cannot. MCHS will be at the forefront of offering these new care modalities.

Collaborative efforts are needed to expand broadband across Wisconsin and MCHS is proud to support this Broadband expansion project and we urge the Public Service Commission to fund this project.

Sincerely,

Susan Turney MD, MS, FACP, FACMPE  
CEO



March 3, 2022

Eau Claire Campuses

Clairemont  
West  
Gateway

620 W. Clairemont Ave.  
Eau Claire, WI 54701-6162  
715-833-6200  
Fax 715-833-6470  
[www.cvtc.edu](http://www.cvtc.edu)

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Steffany Powell Coker:

The Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) is in support of the Jackson County grant application through the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant program. This grant application supports the Chippewa Valley Technical College's mission:

*CVTC delivers innovative and applied education that supports the workforce needs of the region, improves the lives of students, and adds value to our communities.*

Faster and more reliable broadband for CVTC District residents will provide more opportunities for CVTC stakeholders to enroll in the desired educational opportunities available from CVTC. These opportunities include the CVTC Learning Management Systems, On-line courses, Hybrid courses, My Choice Courses, Business and Industry training and course work for High School students. In order for CVTC to be able to deliver programming to district residents, fast and reliable broadband is necessary.

CVTC supports the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant program which in turn will provide opportunities for residents and businesses within the CVTC District. CVTC supports this grant application and hopes that the grant request that is being brought forward by Jackson County and Bug Tussel Wireless is approved.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Thomas Lange, Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer of CVTC at 715-831-7285.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Thomas J. Lange'.

Thomas Lange  
Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
[tlange8@cvtc.edu](mailto:tlange8@cvtc.edu)  
715-831-7285

March 4, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County partnership with Bug Tussel Wireless  
Broadband fiber backbone Grant application**

Ms. Powell Coker,

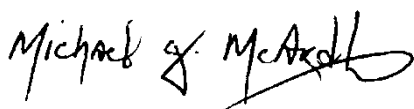
I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County/BugTussel Broadband fiber backbone Grant application. As an Instructor teaching at the Western Technical College location in Black River Falls, Jackson County, and from the other Western regional facilities, I need for my students to have access to reliable high-speed internet to complete their classes.

Western offers the introductory courses of the Business Management degree using Interactive distance learning tools through our satellite buildings. The degree has always been offered by our college using a blended presentation format where two hours of the course are presented in a closed-circuit TV environment and the remaining one hour of three credit courses are presented fully online. My students are already at a stressful disadvantage due to the learning environment and unreliable internet service only compounds their situation. In addition, they must take all second-year courses fully online. Finally, access to me is also fully electronic since my office is in Tomah and I live in LaCrosse. Only a few times each term do I originate classes from the Black River Falls facility. Finding a qualified Instructor who lives in Jackson County would not change much, because that individual would still have to travel each term to the other sites.

What I just described was the "world" before COVID-19. Since the school was "closed" in March 2019 (and reopening slowly for my Program) everything for Jackson County students has been online. The biggest frustration has been that students attending synchronized classes cannot leave their video up while trying to listen to the audio as well as viewing any electronic presentation because their internet service is too slow. My frustration is that first year students need to develop a relationship with the Instructor to be fully successful in an already stressful circumstances. That can happen when I can see their faces and tell whether what I am doing is engaging. The success of our students is dependent on this grant. For 2022 there are 11 students in the Business Management Program from Jackson County, and overall there are 211 students from Jackson County attending the College. So, this is a significant issue for Western. Please don't let us down.

I am very much in support of the Jackson County/BugTussel Broadband fiber backbone Grant application. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-317-9906 or mcardlem@westerntc.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Michael J. McArdle  
806 Lori Place LaCrosse, WI 54603

# School District of Pittsville



## DISTRICT OFFICE

Rodney Figueroa, Superintendent  
5459 Elementary Avenue, Suite 2  
Pittsville, WI 54466  
715-884-6694  
FAX 715-884-5218

## HIGH SCHOOL

Dr. Rod Watson, Principal  
5407 First Avenue  
Pittsville, WI 54466  
715-884-6412  
FAX 715-884-2870

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Heather Friday, Principal  
5459 Elementary Avenue, Suite 1  
Pittsville, WI 54466  
715-884-2517  
FAX 715-884-5232

3/7/2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6th floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Grant. If funded, this middle mile project will bring fiber to the homes for Pittsville School District students in the unserved and underserved areas in the Town of City Point.

Pittsville School District is 367 square miles in Jackson, Juneau, Wood, and Clark Counties. We educate 560 students and have 1.53 students per square mile. Pittsville has invested heavily in user end technology and infrastructure to provide on-site internet access which is robust and high speed.

Pittsville is an invested member of the Rural Virtual Academy and has 12 fulltime virtual students. We offer additional courses in a virtual setting we would otherwise be unable to offer due to lack of qualified staffing for classes of 5 or less students. During the last 2 years, we have used virtual education to keep our students and staff who are quarantined connected to teach and learn in synchronous and asynchronous classrooms. At no time since the start of the pandemic has Pittsville stopped educating our students.

It is the District's goal to promote the development of high-speed broadband services to unserved and underserved areas within our District. Supporting students and families in rural communities with increased broadband access has merit beyond meeting the needs of a pandemic. Some families choose to live in rural areas, but many live in rural areas because that is where they need to be to make a living. Thank you for your consideration.

Our best for their best,

R. Figueroa

Rodney Figueroa  
Superintendent Pittsville School District

Download data collected from 12 locations in our 367 square mile boundaries.  
Underlined in yellow are Jackson county locations within our School district.

	Kajeet	MiFi	AT&T
1. 6660 Bluff Rd Arpin	10mbps	0mbps	2.7mbps
2. 10 miles north of Pitt, Ctv Rd A	1.5mbps	2 mbps	1.6mbps
3. Hwy B 5 miles N of 73	1.6mbps	18mbps	4.5mbps
4. Hwy B and Carv Rock Rd	0	NS	0
5. intersection 73 and B	5.2mbps	83mbps	2.4mbps
6. Hwy 73 town/Sherwood	1.5mbps	310kbps	3.4mbps
7. Hwy 73 and Ctv W	4.9mbps	10mbps	2.3mbps
8. Old Hwy 54 and Prav Rd	0	0	1.3mbps
9. Hwy 54 and Saddle Mound Rd	16mbps	15mbps	4.4mbps
10. Hwy 54 and Cranberry Rd	2.7mbps	670kbps	3.8mbps
11. Hwy 54 and Hwy 80 Dexterville	8.3mbps	6.7mbps	o
12. Hwy 80 and Hwy 173 Babcock	13mbps	39mbps	4.1mbps



**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BLACK RIVER FALLS**  
Inspiring Excellence

March 10, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project.

The SDBRF proudly serves approximately 1,750 students from Black River Falls and other rural surrounding communities. Our District spans over 500 square miles, which includes many coulees and bluffs that add additional burden to connectivity. The Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Offices are located just east of Black River Falls and many of our Ho-Chunk families live further out of town past the Nation's headquarters. We serve a diverse student population with 26% Native American, 16% of our students are identified as having a disability and require special education services, and nearly 60% of our students are from families that live below the poverty level.

I consider the SDBRF to be progressive when it comes to meaningful integration of technology to enhance the learning for our students. We have been a 1:1 district at the high school level for nearly ten years, at the middle school level for five years, and are very close to that ratio at the elementary level. We have consistently provided professional development for our staff to ensure they can maximize the benefits of the technology tools. While our students are in our school buildings, we have amazing teaching and learning happening!

When our school buildings were forced to close in the spring of 2020 we felt confident in our ability to continue to provide meaningful instruction through a combination of paper packets and through the use of technology. Families, students, and staff moved mountains and we finished the 2019-2020 school year with a sense of pride in the work that was accomplished!

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, we gave families a choice to either come face to face, or to attend virtually. While many districts had between 10 – 15% of their families choose virtual instruction, we started the year with 35% choosing to attend virtually. The data shows that Native Americans were more significantly impacted by COVID-19, and with many of our Ho-Chunk students living in multi-generational homes, families were simply not willing to risk physically sending their children to school.

We purchased over 200 hotspots to hand out to families that struggled with internet capability, however, the problem was often NOT the lack of funding for internet services, it was an inability to get reliable internet where they lived. Families with multiple children in the house, and parents trying to work from home, simply didn't have the connectivity to sustain all of that.

Students were forced to “take turns” attending their virtual classes because only one video stream would work at a time. While we invested thousands of dollars in hotspots to boost homes internet capability, these efforts didn’t address many of our virtual families.

Our older students were often seen in the cars outside of the District Office so that they could connect to the District’s Wi-Fi to both attend their classes and to download materials so that they were available when they got home. We offered internet cafés to students and families in the evenings. We provided tutors at the Ho-Chunk Community Center, as the groups were much smaller and that building had reliable internet.

During the forced closure in the spring of 2020, we had the added challenge of not all of our staff members having internet that was capable of live streaming lessons. We literally had teachers teaching from their cars in the parking lots of our schools.

The achievement gap that exists between our native and non-native students was exacerbated during the pandemic. Students and families were forced to choose between protecting the health of their families, and allowing their children to physically attend school. This is unacceptable. In the year 2021, we can do better.

This grant opportunity provides Jackson County with the possibility to overcome a significant hurdle in our rural area. It’s unfortunate that it took a pandemic to bring this subject to light for so many, however, the positive results of this investment will far outlast the effects of COVID. Young families are extremely “connected” and if we want our rural communities to continue to thrive we are going to have to address the broadband issues.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-4357 or at [shelly.severson@brf.org](mailto:shelly.severson@brf.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Your partner in education,



Dr. Shelly Severson  
Superintendent of Schools

Administrative Offices  
301 North Fourth Street  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
(715) 284-4357  
Dr. Shelly Severson - Superintendent  
An Equal Opportunity Employer



## Melrose-Mindoro School District

N181 State Rd. 108 • Melrose, WI 54642

Jeff Arzt, Superintendent  
Rick Dobbs, Junior/Senior High School Principal  
Corey Peterson, EC-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Principal

Phone – (608)488-2201 or (608)857-3410  
Fax – (608)488-2805

March 14, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker;

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Grant. This middle mile project is the first step in bringing fiber-to-the-home for our students.

The Melrose-Mindoro School District is 192 square miles and is located in Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe Counties. We educate 750 students and have approximately 4.11 students per square mile. Forty percent of our families qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We are a very rural district located between Black River Falls and La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Melrose-Mindoro School District has invested heavily in technology the last two years, and as of 2021, is considered a one-to-one school. In addition, in 2018 the district completed a 24.7 million dollar building project that included updated infrastructure that provided our students with high speed onsite internet.

Over the last two school years, we have been forced by the COVID-19 health pandemic to transition from in-person to virtual/at home instruction several times. The transition to virtual education in March of 2020 exposed the lack of reliable and available internet access in our school district. Although we distributed over thirty portable hotspots and purchased additional data for families, many families lived in an area that did not have a cell signal or a dedicated internet line running to their residence.

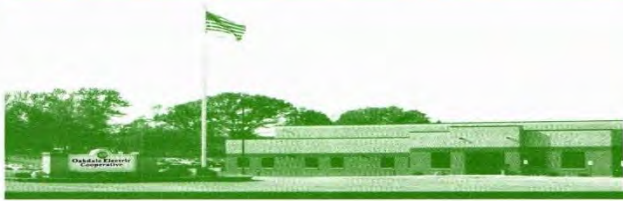
A recent survey of district parents revealed that over eleven percent of students do not have internet access in their primary residence. Eighty-three percent of families without access report it was due to availability and not affordability. In addition, many families who had access to the internet lacked sufficient band width to stream video to support effective student learning. Parents were forced to transport their children to family members' homes, take them to work or sit in the district parking lot to access the internet. We had several students who would sit in our baseball field dugout to do their school work.

This lack of internet availability was a large factor in determining our re-opening plan for the 2021-2022 school year. We decided to offer in-person instruction five days a week for all grade levels. This required the district to implement multiple mitigation strategies which required; additional elementary staff to organize our younger students in cohorts, splitting large Jr/Sr high classes into smaller sections and paying teachers overload pay to accommodate the additional classes, and additional custodial staff to accommodate the additional cleaning protocols. Parents with medically fragile children were forced to make a difficult decision to keep their kids home or risk them contracting COVID-19. This is problematic and presents inequitable education access for our rural families and students.

This broadband Access Grant gives the Melrose-Mindoro students a greater opportunity for an equitable education beyond the pandemic. If we expect rural students and families to continue living and making economic progress in rural communities, it is critical to upgrade broadband service in Jackson County. If you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me at 608-488-2201.

Respectfully,

Jeff Arzt



**Oakdale Electric Cooperative**

PO Box 40 • Oakdale, WI 54649-0040

Phone: (608) 372-4131 • 1-800-241-2468

FAX: (608) 372-5173

[www.oakdalerec.com](http://www.oakdalerec.com)

March 10, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Grant Application. Rural success and growth are dependent on reliable and affordable internet service.

Oakdale Electric Cooperative provides reliable and affordable electricity, and related energy services to residential, business, and farm members in most of Monroe and Juneau Counties, plus portions of Jackson, Sauk, and Wood Counties. The proposed project will bring a true fiber backbone/middle mile line(s) to the area. We currently provide electricity to over 14,000 members in most of Monroe and Juneau Counties, plus portions of Jackson, Sauk, and Wood Counties. This will greatly increase the speed and reliability to our members and other residents in the area.

Below are a few additional facts as to why providing reliable internet to these areas is important.

#### **Cooperatives and Businesses**

Broadband is a key part of modern co-op operations. It can improve grid reliability and efficiency and help pinpoint outages and speed the restoration of service.

#### **Communities**

A 2018 NRECA study showed that the 6.3 million households in co-op service areas that do not have broadband would receive an annual average of nearly \$2,000 each in economic benefits—more than \$12 billion total—if they had access. Benefits include improved health care, online learning opportunities, increased productivity for local businesses, higher housing values, and consumer savings through access to more products from competitive online sellers.

The 2020 pandemic that gripped the state and much of the nation shined a bright light on a big problem—lack of high-speed internet service in many rural areas. At a time when virtual schooling, working from home, and telemedicine had become the norm almost overnight, those without broadband access were simply left behind. It's similar to the fight many farmers took on more than 80 years ago—when those living in urban areas had access to electricity, but rural residents did not.

<https://wecnmagazine.com/article/broadening-rural-broadband/>

For these reasons, it is critical that Jackson County served by Oakdale Electric Cooperative is able to construct a fiber backbone/middle mile fiber line in our area.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 372-8824 or at [ctackmann@oakdalerec.com](mailto:ctackmann@oakdalerec.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CTackmann", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher P. Tackmann  
General Manager & CEO



March 9, 2022

Ms. Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hill Farms State Office Building  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Project**

Ms. Powell Coker,

On behalf of our members and our employees, I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, affordable internet service because it affects nearly all our operations. As a cooperative, our business success, in turn, impacts our nearly 21,000 members, our 100 employees, their families, and all those who live and work in our 10-county field of membership, including Jackson County.

Co-op Credit Union is a full-service financial cooperative with headquarters and three branches in Jackson County. We also have branches in three other neighboring counties, which all face similar broadband needs. It is critical that our members, employees and community members have sufficient internet access to live and conduct business in an increasingly digital world.

Notably, a majority of our members rely on our online banking application to track their balances, make payments and transfers, and pay their bills. We regularly communicate with our members through digital platforms and channels: We send and receive signed documents, provide electronic statements and utilize a phone system that relies on internet connection.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this digital business model became vital when we closed our lobbies to walk-in traffic. Digital access was key to ensuring continuity of business operations and our members' ability to conduct their financial business, including meeting with our staff through virtual platforms. Additionally, employee training and regular meetings transitioned to virtual channels, and we began offering community educational sessions through digital means. Many employees, who live in Jackson County, struggled with internet connectivity due to the lack of adequate internet service and speed.

We cannot stress enough how critical reliable, affordable internet connectivity is for our rural communities and their continued success and growth. Our residents and businesses rely on it to keep us safe, facilitate learning, and preserve natural resources. For these reasons, it is critical that Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please reach out to me at 800-258-0023 or at [echrisinger@coopcu.com](mailto:echrisinger@coopcu.com). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric", is written over the printed name.

Eric L. Chrisinger  
Co-op Credit Union President/CEO

March 12, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Having reliable and affordable high speed internet service in rural areas of Jackson County is critical to business operations.

Our family has been growing cranberries in the township of Knapp in Jackson County since 1942. Our equipment associated with the fresh fruit operation require high-speed internet. Presently, we have two internet providers. The first service is for our fresh fruit that has a download/upload of 24/.3. The second provider for shop is 2.4/.19.

Access to higher internet service would be a substantial improvement not only to our cranberry business, but to our home and family.

We appreciate your support in acquiring high-speed broadband internet connectivity throughout rural Jackson County.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan C. Olson", is written over the word "Respectfully,".

Alan C. Olson

Olson Brothers Cranberry Company

March 14, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Middle Mile Broadhead Grant. I am a Kindergarten teacher at Blair-Taylor Elementary School, and my husband and I own a dairy farm. We have two sons, Samuel is two years old and Noah is 3 months old. Our family would greatly benefit from having internet in multiple aspects of our lives.

Teaching in a rural district during the pandemic wasn't easy for me without having access to internet. I was expected to teach reading and math lessons virtually every single day for an hour and then be available via email throughout the rest of the day. Since we don't have internet at home, I was having to pack up my son and drive to Blair (20 minute drive) every day so I could use my parents internet. We do have internet on our phones but it isn't fast enough or reliable enough to count on to reach all of my students. Even before the pandemic, and as things get back to normal, not having internet at home causes stress because I can't work from home at all meaning I have to go into work on the weekends just so I can access the online materials and prep for the week. Being able to work on my computer in the evenings when my boys go to bed would save me from having to stay late at school or from having to go in on weekends. There are also multiple online teaching classes that are offered to me as a teacher but that I have to decline in participating throughout the year because it is just not convenient for me without having internet access at home.

On our farm, we have 50-70 cows milking at all times and 60-70 steers. We have 420 acres that we cash crop. We are currently trying to implement more precision farming through GPS planting, spraying and combining. To do this, it would be very helpful to have a reliable internet source to download the set mapping from our GPS to our computer. It would also be beneficial having internet for uploading documents for crop insurance purposes, and USDA mapping. We do all of our own tax planning and run into difficulties without having internet. With a new dairy facility hopefully coming by Summer of 2022, we would like to be able to implement cow activity monitors to help monitor general herd health in which some systems require internet system. We would also like to have Wi-Fi cameras to monitor our calving maternity ward.

As a family, having internet at home would be very beneficial as our kids grow up, for work and also for our day-to-day enjoyment. I finished my master's degree last year and that was very difficult for me as I had to drive to my parents' house in Blair to work on all of my assignments because it was all online. As our boys start school, they will need reliable internet for their homework assignments. Our family would like to be able to live stream school events such as sporting events, school board meetings and concerts from our house and we would also enjoy being able to download and stream entertainment.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (608) 797-3880 or at [olsona@btsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:olsona@btsd.k12.wi.us). Our family is highly in support of this Jackson County Broadhead Project. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,  
Alexandra Olson

March 14, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Jackson County Broadband Grant. I am the Cranberry Outreach Specialist with the University of Wisconsin – Madison Division of Extension. My office is in Wood County, and I serve cranberry farmers in all 18 cranberry-producing counties. The areas impacted by your project (including Bear Bluff, City Point and Knapp) are home to some of the most productive cranberry farms in North America. The ability of these farmers to capture and transmit data (such as high-resolution imagery) will improve their future production. Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Wood County is directly related to the success of the agriculture economy.

If funded, this grant would improve internet service to the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station, recently built in Millston, as well as production cranberry marshes throughout the rural areas of the county. Managing a profitable cranberry farm requires attentive management. Farmers today rely on hardwired connections to temperature sensors to protect from frost. They must take water quality samples manually. Reliable high speed broadband would enable continuous data logging and data transmission, allowing better management and time-tracking of these important items. Currently cranberry farmers apply fertilizer in flat-rate applications, but if they had the ability to capture and process high-resolution imagery of their vines in-season, they would be able to tailor their fertilizer applications to the plant's needs more precisely. This will result in reduced unnecessary cost for farmers, along with improved yields and environmental outcomes. We have seen these outcomes in rowcrops already, and improved data throughput in cranberry growing regions will enable this progress for cranberries as well.

Further, having access to high-speed internet will enable the recruiting of staff who otherwise might need to move to cities. With broadband, a spouse of a cranberry worker can work remotely in a field of their expertise without having to leave City Point; or for those who find work in Jackson County, quality of life will be boosted by better connectivity with hobbies and educational opportunities throughout the world. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at [allison.jonjak@wisc.edu](mailto:allison.jonjak@wisc.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Allison Jonjak  
Cranberry Outreach Specialist  
University of Wisconsin – Madison Division of Extension



MaryAnn Lippert &lt;jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com&gt;

---

**Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**

1 message

**Schoolcraft, April** <April.Schoolcraft@co.jackson.wi.us>

Mon, Mar 7, 2022 at 9:59 AM

To: "jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com" &lt;jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com&gt;

Good morning MaryAnn Lippert and the Broadband Workgroup,

I'm April Schoolcraft, Real Property Lister/GIS Specialist for Jackson County Land Information Department.

I am in support of the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project for the following work-related reasons:

1. Better quality and increased internet connectivity would allow GIS (geographic information systems) users to utilize web applications for GIS purposes if & when needed.
  - a. Ex: if services such as collector, survey123 were utilized in the field, or using the current web mapping site (WGXtreme) for field verifications would benefit many departments of our County Government such as highway, zoning, land conservation, forestry, emergency management, sheriff deputies, & land information
2. If an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for Incident Command were to be needed, we'd depend less on 'hot-spot' internet service; reducing the need of considering whether we set up in a 'dead zone' part of the county (one less thing to worry about during an emergency).
3. Reducing the amount of 'dead zones' in the county is going to benefit a sheriff deputy's connection for mobile syncing devices, allowing connection and immediate radio/internet services when time is urgent to receive data and necessary information.
4. Wi-fi calling may be more readily available than cellular service in parts of the county if broadband covers the county, which could mean less chance of getting stranded without help (or cellular service) during bad weather, or vehicular break down, or a dangerous situation such as a site visit or environmental situation such as an injury or medical emergency. Could wi-fi calling be used by fire/EMS/law enforcement in the 'dead zones' of the County where radio traffic using existing communication towers is poor? You'd be amazed at how much our fire/EMS/law crews 'compensate' and just 'deal with' poor radio reception; they should never need to deal with those situations.
5. Could broadband assist with internet connection to Town Hall facilities and be of assistance for voting/election times or even streaming of training videos to staff/residents?

I don't have all the answers, but I do know some of the shortfalls residents/emergency services/local governments have been enduring over the years. I guess I just wanted to bring these situations to the table, just in case no one else did.

Thank you for your time,

April Schoolcraft

(former EMT/firefighter for BRF, former Incident Command Management Team member for Wisconsin DNR, current Jackson County Resident)

3/7/22, 8:27 PM

Gmail - Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

April Schoolcraft

Real Property Lister/GIS Specialist

Jackson County Courthouse, 307 Main Street

Black River Falls WI 54615

Phone: 715-284-0203 Fax: 715-284-0238

[april.schoolcraft@co.jackson.wi.us](mailto:april.schoolcraft@co.jackson.wi.us)



221 Main Street  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
Phone: (715) 284-9448  
Fax: (715) 284-7153

401 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 68  
Melrose, WI 54642  
Phone: (608) 488-2411  
Fax: (608) 488-2308

[www.brcbank.com](http://www.brcbank.com)

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project Grant

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project Grant. Business success, growth, and vitality in our area are highly dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of our operations. Importantly, success of our operations is directly linked to critical information access to the homes of our customers in the communities we serve.

Black River Country Bank has been a cornerstone in our community since we started as the Bank of Melrose back in 1907. While much has changed in 115 years of business ... our integrity, safety & soundness, community commitment, inclusion of others, and customer-centered approach has never wavered. We are locally owned family business who employs 25 people, with a 7-member, local Board of Directors who provide oversight; all who have owned/operated their own local businesses. Our community bank consists of two physical offices in Black River Falls and Melrose, as well as remote staff across Jackson County. We offer an extensive range of lending (agricultural, commercial, small business, residential mortgage, and consumer loans) and deposit (personal and business checking, savings, CDs, IRAs, HSAs, and more) services, as well as *essential* convenience services for our customers (and employees) such as online banking, mobile banking, debit cards and apps, eSign, online bill pay, e-Statements, 24-hour ATM service, and very soon ... deposit account opening and funding, all online.

Almost every single aspect of our business operation is dependent on swift, secure, dependable online access. Whether it be using our internal systems to perform transactions and make loans for our customers, opening accounts, providing real-time account information and balances, connecting to our core server for daily transactions submissions and system upgrades, fraud detection, mitigation, & prevention, internal document sharing and communications, external customer and vendor communications and service, performing important market analyses, managing social media, as well as conducting research and development.

Our website at [www.brcbank.com](http://www.brcbank.com) is our essential and primary means of communicating and connecting with our mass audience. It is of utmost importance for business continuity and growth. Our internet-based platform provides our business and consumer customers individualized access to their online banking accounts and loans (directly from our homepage) where they can perform account inquiry and transactions such as transfers, loans payments, bill payments, and review of their e-Statements for account balancing. The site also includes a full array of marketing resources and communications. For example, a listing and description of our deposit and lending products and services for customers to learn and choose from, as well as contact persons, and online forms for Getting Started on account and loan opening. Plus, soon we will provide customers an opportunity to complete the full deposit account opening process and funding, all online (all in roughly 3 minutes with proper internet access and speed). Our website provides important alerts, important instructions and tutorials, job openings and



221 Main Street  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
Phone: (715) 284-9448  
Fax: (715) 284-7153

401 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 68  
Melrose, WI 54642  
Phone: (608) 488-2411  
Fax: (608) 488-2308

[www.brcbank.com](http://www.brcbank.com)

applications, advertising, promotions, community events, an outlet for communicating issues via Contact Us, Stop Payments, reporting lost or stolen cards, etc. The pandemic exacerbated our customers' and employees' needs and use for these essential online tools. Adoption and conversion rates with our online systems have skyrocketed, especially between March 2020 and March 2021. What was once a perceived "luxury" became a normal and essential way of doing business and competing with the larger world. If we didn't have the digital tools in place for our customers, our turnover risk was significantly increased.

Employee's working remotely are also presented with challenges when internet connections are unreliable, slow, intermittent, or simply don't work. When internet is good, productivity and morale is high, work routines and communications can be conducted in a regular fashion. With poor internet service, working from home is difficult to do, as employees are not able to effectively communicate with one another via web conferences or emails, and they are not able to easily access information necessary to complete their work or connect with their co-workers. Frustrations can run high, thus a loss in productivity and decreased morale, and ultimately could affect employee satisfaction, job performance, and retention. This doesn't even touch on the issue of remote/virtual schooling, especially when that was at its peak (and has continued off and on across the various school districts in our county; as well as during inclement weather school cancellations) and its affects on our employees' families and community. One sentence cannot do justice for the critical need in our area, especially with such a high percentage of low-access, low-income families, many residing in rural Jackson County.

Employee recruitment & retention in a post-pandemic world means immediate, effective communication, and high-touch access to people, information, and applications. Recruitment, screening, interviews are regularly conducted online ... Zoom and Microsoft Teams are our "go-to" online tools. High speed, stable connections are essential to effective recruiting whether local or for potential employees looking to relocate. As our business continues to recruit new employees, residential broadband service is a "non-negotiable" in attracting qualified employees, in our area and beyond.

The above are only a few examples of why it is critical that our area of Jackson County expands its fiber infrastructure, reach the fiber into our homes, at a higher rate and speed to keep up with the rest of the country. This project will enable critical activities such as remote work, remote schooling when necessary, access to healthcare, and local business operations to continue seamlessly. All essential for a thriving community.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-9448 or at [becker@brcbank.com](mailto:becker@brcbank.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

*Bob Becker*

Bob Becker  
President  
Black River Country Bank



415 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Black River Falls, WI 54615  
715-284-4213  
[president@brfelc.org](mailto:president@brfelc.org)

---

March 11, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

**Subject: Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**

Ms.Coker,

During the COVID shutdowns, our church (Evangelical Lutheran Church-Black River Falls) implemented and utilized internet-based communication tools/platforms to reach our congregation. We developed weekly online worship services, prayer groups, daily video devotions, and utilized video conferencing for meetings and providing care to people. Over the course of time, it became very apparent that the limited broadband access in Jackson County, especially in rural areas, greatly hindered our capability and capacity to communicate and effectively delivery our ministry.

Whether it's a church providing ministry or a school remotely delivering education and/or a business managing work flows offsite, we all need improved and reliable broadband services to better serve all residents of Jackson County.

For this reason, it is critical that Jackson County adequately upgrades its broadband service so that all residents have the tools to be successful and prosper. The Evangelical Lutheran Church (BRF) wholeheartedly supports the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-284-4213 or at [President@brfelc.org](mailto:President@brfelc.org)

Respectfully,



Ed Johnson  
Council President  
ELC Black River Falls, WI



March 9, 2022

Subject: Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County ARPA Broadband Internet Access Grant. Rural quality of life and economic development is dependable on reliable and affordable internet service.

It is critical for me to have better internet speed. I am located in a rural area over 10 miles from a town or village. I currently have Century Link and my speeds are 10/1.0. The upload speed is so slow, that I was not able to accept a job opportunity that required a minimum of 5 on the upload speed. 1.0 is too low.

I have been told several times by CenturyLink that I am at the end of the line as far as their service area is concerned. I am not sure about this statement; however, I do know that I cannot attend online classes or transmit important documents due to the extremely slow speed.

It is critical for that the rural areas in Jackson County are upgraded to a true high speed broadband service.

If you have any questions or would like to further this discussion, I can be reached at 815-451-7016 or via email at [cath775@yahoo.com](mailto:cath775@yahoo.com).

Thank you for your consideration.

Catherine Link

N3086 Kelly Road, Black River Falls, WI 54615

March 15, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Hello,

We fully support the program to bring faster internet in all rural areas in Jackson County, especially in Manchester Township on Dodge Road where we live. Our address is N3522 Dodge Road Black River Falls WI 54615.

Our upload speeds at best are 0.5 to 1.0 -- and our download speeds range from 1.5-3.5 on a good day. We have complained repeatedly with Century Tel about the incredibly poor service here and they claim they cannot do better. So, obviously we would LOVE to have even 50 mb/s and 100 mb/s would be fantastic.

I own a small business out of my home and soon a small shop which will also require internet services. My business requires the internet every single day Monday through Sunday. The current ancient internet speeds here add hours to my day, it truly is wasted time.

My parents live next door, they also own a small business (vacation rental) and they rely heavily on the internet as well. So you would be able to greatly improve the efficiency with which we can assist our customers with providing us all 100 mb/s internet services.

Having better cell service too would be great not only for our businesses, but also my husband who works for the Tomah VA. He is on call at least one day each week and one full weekend each month. So, having a reliable cell service would help him get calls faster. My parents too need better cell service, their current service is incredibly poor. From a health and safety standpoint it would be best for all of us to have better cell service in case of an emergency as well.

If you could PLEASE get faster internet out here, we would all greatly appreciate it.

Jen Jennings  
Companion Animal Nutritionist  
Owner - Creekside Kennels LLC  
Website - [www.creeksidekennelsgsd.com](http://www.creeksidekennelsgsd.com)  
Email - [creeksidekennelsshop@gmail.com](mailto:creeksidekennelsshop@gmail.com)

March 6, 2022

MaryAnn Lippert  
Jackson County Broadband Consultant

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**

Ms. Lippert,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

I am a licensed A-EMT living in the Town of North Bend. We moved here 8 years ago from an area that enjoyed high-speed internet (60 Mbps). I was employed as an EMS Division Chief for a municipal fire department but was unable to continue that employment here due to the lack of reliable internet service. (Our internet download speed is 25 Mbps and our upload speed is 5 Mbps). This is a result of changing carriers recently. We were at 4.5 download and .6 upload prior to the change) A significant improvement but still not worthy of applause by any means!

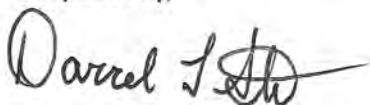
I rely on the internet for continuing education to maintain my licensure. Since the beginning of the pandemic approximately 90% or more of my continuing education has been through video conferencing. This has been extremely difficult given our low internet speeds. If anyone else in my house tries to use the internet during a video conference, the video conference completely shuts down. This has also been the case during virtual healthcare visits with my physician!

As time goes on, the internet becomes increasingly more critical in day-to-day life. Not only do we in our household rely on the internet for education and healthcare but also for finances and entertainment. A vast majority of our banking and shopping is done on-line. We also try to stream movies and video games for entertainment but again because of the slow internet speeds this is very challenging.

Many in our little community have been frustrated with the slow internet speeds. For example, during the pandemic lockdown a friend of ours was forced to work from home and her son was forced to attend school at home. They could not use the internet at the same time!

I strongly support the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. I believe so strongly in this, that if the Jackson County Broadband Grant is funded, I will pledge \$100 in local matching funds. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 262-206-4384 or dstoen1286@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrel L. Stoen", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Darrel L. Stoen  
N1525 Sandberg Road  
Melrose, WI 54642

March 14, 2022

To Whom it May Concern:

**Subject:** Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

I live in rural Jackson County in the Town of Manchester. Over the years, I have tried various means of obtaining satisfactory internet. Our telephone service, Centurytel, offers DSL at a speed of 500Kb – about the same as dial-up, but has shown no interest in providing true broadband in our area. We tried a wi-max service and a satellite service with little success. We currently have Hughesnet Gen5 satellite link and can use a mobile hot spot on our AT&T mobile service. None of these have been adequate.

Here are a few of the issues we have experienced:

- Speed and Reliability – The Hughesnet offers speed of about 30 meg download, but very slow upload, in the area of 400Kb. This makes any process requiring two-way communication almost impossible. It is also unstable and goes out completely in any adverse weather.
  - This makes holding a zoom call almost impossible.
  - I also maintain a couple of websites, and the time delay and instability make that difficult.
  - I am unable to utilize on-demand programming due to unstable internet connection.
  - I get somewhat more reliable service with the mobile hotspot, but the download speed is only about 6 meg. However, the upload is somewhat better, in the range of 2-3 meg.
- Capped metered bandwidth – Both of the services limit the amount of data we can use in a month's billing period.
  - When the data allowance is exceeded, data speeds are lowered to less than 1meg until the next billing period or purchase of additional data.
  - This precludes the use of video surveillance for security systems.
- Shifting of Services to require broadband – Many businesses are abandoning print and voice media and forcing customers to use websites.
  - Abandoning phone lines for customer service...or utilizing excessive hold times.
  - Upgrading to sites that require broadband to support videos etc.
  - Makes it difficult to keep up with competition if trying to run a business.
  - Makes it difficult for seniors to adapt to requirements for data input.

The need for fast, reliable broadband internet is a required infrastructure for living and working in today's world. The private sector does not see a profit to providing it to rural areas. Just like the rural electrification of the 1930's, government assistance is required. I am highly in support of the Jackson County Broadband Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 612-801-1225 or [jayseverance@comcast.net](mailto:jayseverance@comcast.net). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jay A. Severance  
N3937 Hawk Island Road.  
Black River Falls, WI 54615  
[jayseverance@comcast.net](mailto:jayseverance@comcast.net)

Karalee Wensel  
Wensel Family Farm  
N4331 County Rd. X  
Black River Falls, WI 54615

March 8, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Please accept this letter in support of expanding broadband access for rural Jackson County.

Many areas of Jackson County are severely lacking in internet availability. I live in east-central Irving township and the only way we have internet is by paying \$115 per month for Hughesnet. I have neighbors who think that is too much money and don't have internet access. Others, like myself, pay the \$115 only to be throttled less than half way through the month.

Our internet is used for educational purposes by both my son and myself. My husband uses it to keep up with news, changing weather conditions as well as conduct business. During Covid shutdown, I would get up and use our internet at 6:00 am to have better internet access, continuing through the day, always waiting for materials to load. My son, being a night owl, would get up later and stay up late, often doing his school work well into the night so we could "share" our resources.

More recently, after we were back to school, both my son and I still need to use the internet to complete our work. So much time is wasted as we sit and wait and wait for assignments to load either to be completed or graded; videos to load so they can buffer and be viewed, then buffer some more, or assignments to be posted... all due to our internet being throttled after using our \$115 allotment of "high speed".

Our internet speeds are slow meaning we cannot work efficiently. Since it is early in the month and we have only used 90% of our monthly "high speed allotment, our current download speed is 12.5 and our our upload speed is currently .46. As soon as we use our remaining 10% however, our download speeds will reduce to less than 2mbps for the remainder of our month. This makes it very difficult to get school work done.

Driving through our neighborhood, you will notice that equipment has been put in place/partially installed in various parts of our community, however, it is not hooked up. When I chat with our town chairman, I am informed that local officials are trying to find people to finish the installation, but companies aren't interested in doing this.

Please don't let this partial investment go to waste. Rural community members are not asking for a free pass, we are willing to pay the same amounts that our town friends pay for internet access. All we ask if for the same quality of internet resources that are available to those living in town. Farmers and people working from home deserve those resources just like everyone else.

Thank you for your time and efforts in this matter and know that your work is appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Karalee Wensel  
N4331 County Rd. X  
Black River Falls, WI  
Town of Irving. Jackson County

March 10, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Access Grant

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Access Grant.

Rural quality of life and economic development is dependent on reliable and affordable internet service. My main concern is for the young people of Jackson County and other rural areas. The 2020 COVID shut down of schools showed how crippling it was in rural areas, as many students did not have access to reliable internet. The continuing COVID crisis adds to the desperation for area teachers to continue their efforts to teach their classes when not everyone has the necessary internet access. It is for these students and teachers that I write this letter urging upgrades to broadband service in Jackson County so that all residents have access when they need it, whether it be for school, or work, at prices they can afford. Jackson County is considered a rural county, which makes it even more important that this be available. For these reasons, I feel it is critical that Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. Thank you for your consideration.

Lori Johnson  
N9762 Burton Road  
Hixton, WI 54635

March 11, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Access Grant. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- My current internet situation is that we use our cell phones as 'hotspots' when we are home. I am unable to reliably use that when nearing data limits even though we have an unlimited data plan. Working at home due to COVID presented a challenge and I was unable to remote in to my work site from home due to very slow, or no connectivity. To be able to work remotely is not an option for either my spouse or myself at this time.
- The cost of having reliable, speedy internet is prohibitive. We have a \$40 per phone for unlimited data but our reception is spotty at times but the cost is manageable. We have five towers that we can see from our home (the closest one being less than a quarter mile away) but still have spotty service. I realize that they are not all Verizon (our cell phone provider) towers but we are hesitant to change providers due to the higher cost. Remember HughesNet? People in our neighborhood dropped their providers for this service when the first came through our area and are not happy with their service or fees. I'm hesitant to change providers because I'm not sure what type of service we would get.

I strongly support this project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-488-7981 or harmurfarm@aol.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Michelle & Paul Murray  
W15630 State Hwy 54  
Melrose, WI 54642

March 7, 2022

Ms. MaryAnn Lippert  
Jackson County Broadband Consultant

Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

Ms. Lippert:

The North Bend Lions Club strongly supports the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project Grant. Rural quality of life and economic development is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service.

Our club is part of a 1.4 million member international organization that attempts to be the leader in community and humanitarian service.

The Township of North Bend is located in the Driftless Region of Western Wisconsin. Current internet service is hampered by the many hills, valleys and remote coulees that prevent line of sight service. Where available, Centurylink commercial service is intermittent at best. Typical bandwidth is 1-1.5 mbps and in best case scenarios might reach 4 mbps. Many areas within the area do not allow for internet coverage at all.

The recent pandemic highlighted the need for upgraded internet capability in our region. From an economic, educational, and medical perspective; our lack of 100% internet coverage throughout the County disadvantaged our residents:

1. Economics: Those forced to work from home had to go to inconvenient locations to perform simple tasks like applying for a job on-line, attending a "Zoom" meeting, or communicating with colleagues.
2. Educational: Many of our students who attended school "virtually" could not do so at home and were forced to go to friend's homes or common gathering places to do homework or attend "virtual" classes.
3. Medical: Patients could not stream "virtual" appointments with doctor's or physician's assistants given slow or nonexistent internet speeds. Additionally, residents were unable to obtain the most current guidance on the virus and/or determine when, where, and how to obtain a Covid Test or receive the vaccine.

In order for Rural America to compete with and coexist with Urban America; high speed internet service must be provided to rural counties. If developed, our rural residents can compete with anyone in the world from their front doorstep. Absent high speed internet capabilities; current residents will miss out on the economic, educational, and medical services described above and prospective residents will simply choose to live elsewhere.

**Bottom Line**: It is critical that Jackson County upgrades to the federal broadband service standard of 100 mbps upload and download speeds. We believe so strongly in this, that if the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project Grant is funded, the North Bend Lions Club pledges \$500 in local matching funds.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-792-8279 or cbyom@hotmail.com.

Respectfully,

Keith Byom  
President  
North Bend Lions Club



Address:  
N1525 Sandberg Rd.  
Melrose, WI 54642

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing this letter in support of the "Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project." I was deeply disappointed to learn that the first grant was not approved but am very excited to hear that we still have an opportunity to get fast, reliable, and affordable internet service here in Jackson County. Rural areas should have the same access to high-speed internet service as the larger cities and businesses.

About six (6) months ago, I was having problems with my internet service. Our local phone company, (Century Link) insisted that according to their assessment, there was not a problem and that it must be on my end. After running several problem solver diagnostics, they sent me a new modem. That didn't seem to solve or improve my issue, so a technician ended up coming out. Even though the new modem let me connect to the internet, it did nothing to solve the speed of my connection. The technician told me that I am at 2.5mpbs and it would not get any faster anytime soon. I am still restarting/rebooting my modem, as it takes a long time to make a connection to specific sites. My husband needs reliable internet services, for his job. Without quality internet services, we are unable to keep up with the opportunities that larger cities are offered.

I sincerely hope that something can be done to enable all residents of Jackson County the reliable, fast internet services that we deserve. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-662-3844. Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Paul & Judy Olson  
W15776 West Jackson Road  
Taylor, WI 54659-8402

March 7, 2022

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities.

- We operate a farm in Jackson County. We check the commodity markets and weather daily, with this being done online. We do not currently subscribe to an internet provider so that means we go outside to try to get internet access from our phones. On a cloudy day, this may take only a minute. Other days, it may take several minutes, if the information loads at all. The pandemic created opportunities to virtually attend agriculture related seminars and classes. The window for those opportunities closes when high speed internet access is not available. This puts us at a disadvantage in trying to keep updated with current and upcoming agricultural practices.
- In the absence of service from an internet provider, speeds are 11.69/.56.

I am highly in support of the Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 920-883-8853 or [ptdunnigan@msn.com](mailto:ptdunnigan@msn.com) . Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Paul & Tamara Dunnigan  
N4610 County Hwy X  
Black River Falls, WI 54615



March 04, 2022

**Subject:** Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

We lease seasonal campsites for people to enjoy with their own RV or camper. Our customers' can be from this and surrounding states, and also includes "Snowbirds" that come up from Southern states for the summer months. Our marketing is only through the internet....this is how we are found by customers' throughout the U.S. Customers' also have come to rely on the availability of internet for their own use as our location has spotty to no cell service. We provide limited free wi-fi at clubhouse for our seasonal site member's to use. We feel that without this amenity we would lose a great many customers.

Due to the lack of reliable cell service in this area, we must rely on internet to communicate.

Right now our only option is satellite wi-fi. We use Viasat with 12 mbps speeds (40gb of data monthly). For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-662-4040 or at [wtwchgo@wtwchgo.com](mailto:wtwchgo@wtwchgo.com).

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

***Robert Knourek, Jr.***

Robert Knourek, Jr.  
President  
Kenorik Enterprises, Inc.  
Dba: Pheasant Ridge Resort  
N4299 Lien Rd  
Melrose, WI 54642



# NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 7, 2022

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
Broadband Expansion Grant Review Committee  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Public Service Commission Officials:

Please accept this letter in support of the efforts of Jackson County and their Broadband Project, and Bug Tussel Wireless/Hilbert Communications, as they apply for Broadband Access Grants through the Public Service Commission. This project is located in and around the 70<sup>th</sup> Assembly District.

As State Representative for the 70<sup>th</sup> Assembly District and Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Rural Development, I have worked hard to improve access for residents of rural and underserved areas of the state and throughout my legislative district because I know how important access to broadband internet service is to communities, workers, businesses, and students.

The approval of this grant proposal would allow residents, students and our future workforce to continue to adequately prepare for the challenges of a changing economy. Additionally, the approval of this proposal would allow current residents, workers, and business owners to have the tools they need to continue to succeed in the digital age and in a dynamic economy.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request and ask that Jackson County and their Broadband Project proposal be given serious consideration. If there are any questions, concerns, or reservations about the proposal, I would respectfully ask that you work with the key stakeholders to help try to help remedy them. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy VanderMeer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy VanderMeer  
State Representative

March 14, 2022

## Jackson County Broadband Project

I am writing in support of the proposed **Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**, which will bring increased internet speeds to my home. Modern life is dependent on fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. As a resident of Southeast Jackson County, I expect digital equity with those living in larger communities and this opportunity is a game-changer for my area.

As a young professional, working mother, I have long felt the struggles of slow, unreliable internet service. Those issues have only been heightened over the last few years.

When schools went virtual in spring of 2020, we attempted to join virtual learning at home for my daughter in 4K. My first concern was that her participating in that for an hour at a time would quickly eat away the limited data on our HughesNet Plan, and would then inhibit me from being able to effectively participate in virtual work later in the month if needed. We have satellite internet, because at our home we have **no cell phone service**, so we are unable to connect to mobile data of any kind, and also only satellite internet availability – I have only found Exede and HughesNet as our options. Once we got her connected for virtual learning, we continually heard her teacher say, “Harper, you’re frozen.” As if transitioning to virtual wasn’t hard enough on a 5-year-old. She was longing to participate, but her actions and voice went unnoticed by her teacher, or were so delayed that they were a disruption for others in the class.

My job as an HR Manager primarily requires me to be on-site, but there are many instances that I attempt to perform work from home. Many of the platforms I need to access in order to do so must be done via VPN. Once I attempt to connect to VPN, the connectivity is at a crawling speed. On more than one occasion, due to slow speeds when trying to connect, I have loaded up my children, driven down to the local church parking lot where I have cell phone reception, connected my laptop via a hotspot to my cell phone, and then accessed what I need to.

Our global organization has broadened the hours we are expected to be available for meetings, since most are able to join the calls from home. Now with meetings starting at 7am, I do not have enough time to drop my children off at daycare upon opening and then make the drive from North Bend (Melrose) to my workplace in Black River Falls. I attempt to join the virtual meetings from home, and have to believe my lack of participation is a direct reflection on my performance – but I am reluctant to speak up because every time I’ve tried, my response/question is so delayed in coming through due to poor connectivity.

On inclement weather days, which we have plenty of, daycare may be closed, and/or I might be more comfortable staying home with my children than transporting them on icy roads. I’ve found myself with an extension pole and a broom, attempting to brush snow off of our HughesNet satellite on the roof, in hopes that the internet connection will pick up just enough to allow me to join a meeting or perform

some work, but often rain, snow, or fog in the atmosphere, is enough to completely inhibit us from having an internet connection.

We are unable to participate in Facetime or Zoom meetings with friends and family. We can't opt for telehealth care. I have to coordinate pieces of my day around our internet speeds and data limits. I utilize a fitness streaming service for physical activity. Because streaming this for 30-60 minutes per day would quickly use our data allotment for the month, I utilize the "bonus zone" time period where we are allotted extra data. I wake up around 4am to get my workout in without using our regular data. On days where I've opted to try to stream later, the video gets stuck at "buffering" for so long, that I end up just shutting it off.

When we have friends or a babysitter over, I have to advise them not to stream anything as to not use up our data. Although our lack of entertainment options isn't the worst thing – we rent DVDs from the library and watch a lot of PBS Kids – it would be nice to have the option to use Netflix, Disney+, or any of the various opportunities that school shares for virtual learning/activity platforms. We have been gifted wi-fi enabled devices that we do not use. I hurriedly download podcasts on my phone via cellular download or when connected to others' wi-fi, so I can later listen to them at home.

Our current speeds indicate 24 download / .02 upload, with significantly reduced speeds once we use our monthly data allotment.

Without quality internet services, we are not keeping up with the world around us. If this proposal from is funded, better access will improve my personal, professional, and family life and well-being. My children will be afforded equal opportunities to others in less rural areas. Communicating online is crucial for our community.

I am highly in support of the **Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-896-9373 (but only during business hours, because remember – no cell phone service available at home for us, even though we reside right on a main County Road) - or [reva.witte@gmail.com](mailto:reva.witte@gmail.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Reva Witte  
W16067 County Road D  
Melrose, WI 54642 (North Bend)

March 11, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Access Grant**

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Access Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

SCORE is a national volunteer organization of over 13,000 people who give their time and talents to mentor entrepreneurs and small businesspeople. My Chapter here in West Central Wisconsin provided over 1900 hours of service in 2020 and is on track to provide even more hours in 2021.

In 2022 the COVID pandemic continues to hurt many small businesses. Many try to pivot to online sales and service only to be hindered by the lack of slow speed of the broadband offerings here in Jackson County. Do you know how frustrating it was to move to online to only have your work not be practical due to speed and capacity?

It is interesting to note that CenturyTel used to offer speeds of 45Mbps. They have retracted this offer due to capacity. Their offer of 10Mbps is not 100% available in the county nor during all times of the normal business day.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 608-575-5386 or at [peter.bushman@scorevolunteer.org](mailto:peter.bushman@scorevolunteer.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Peter J Bushman  
Chapter Chairman  
West Central Wisconsin Score

# sfb

## SECURITY FINANCIAL BANK

March 9, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Grant. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable, and affordable internet service.

Security Financial Bank is a community bank providing deposit and loan services for individuals and businesses within the Jackson County market. We have 2 locations in Jackson County which are Black River Falls and Alma Center within Jackson County. We currently have 27 employees between these 2 locations.

A vast majority of our customer base is now enrolled with online banking, and it is imperative we have strong/fast/ reliable internet service available to our customers. Remote deposit is also receiving a greater usage and will continue to grow for our customers.

Digitally, we share important documents and data with staff and customers, communicate with our vendors and make purchases, track our products as they are being shipped, and many more activities.

Nearly 50% of our workforce were required to work remotely during the Covid pandemic. At multiple times, lack of broadband internet service reduced the productivity of our staff and affected the service we could provide to our customers.

A fast and reliable internet service for Jackson County will continue to support a strong growth in our local economy. This service will allow our customers to compete on a national and international level that may not be available currently.

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-670-0734 or at [djohnson@sfbank.com](mailto:djohnson@sfbank.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully



Duane K. Johnson  
Market President & Relationship Manager  
Security Financial Bank



601 7<sup>th</sup> St. N.  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
Chris Hardie, CEO  
[chris@7riversalliance.org](mailto:chris@7riversalliance.org)

3/14/22

Ms. Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Madison, WI 53705-9100

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Jackson County Broadband Project**

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Project. The availability of reliable and affordable internet service is critical to Jackson County businesses.

The 7 Rivers Alliance is one of nine regional economic development organizations in Wisconsin. We serve nine counties in western Wisconsin, including Jackson. We know and understand the need for broadband in our region.

One lesson we learned from the pandemic was resiliency -- many people in our region quickly adapted and worked from home. But many people -- and school children -- could not because high speed internet was simply not available.

I also happen to be a resident and business owner in Jackson County and struggle with our 3MB connection that is often slower than that. Large sections of Jackson County have no service at all.

As we move into recovery, the challenge of attracting a workforce to our region and state has become even more difficult as we struggle with finding workers. On the quality of life scale, our region -- and Jackson County -- scores high, making it a very attractive place to live and raise a family. But we cannot attract families to live here without having broadband.

I applaud Jackson County for taking the initiative to come up with a broadband plan. Now is the time to make the investment and I support this project. Please feel free to reach me if you have any other questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Hardie'.

Chris Hardie  
CEO

3/8/2022

Steffany Powell Coker, Secretary to the Commission  
Public Service Commission  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Ms. Powell Coker,

My name is Steve Johnson and I work and live in Curran Township. I am writing in support of the Jackson County Broadband Project in partnership with Bug Tussel and bringing better quality internet to the entire Jackson County area.

Currently we use our hotspots on our phones (Verizon) for our internet service. We tried a satellite service but that was very poor service for over \$100/ month. It makes it difficult to do much work from home as a realtor.

I work for Coldwell Banker out of the Black River Falls office. I can tell you that even before the COVID issue in 2020, there were buyers that would not buy a house (or even request a showing) if the property did not have internet where one could work remotely from home. As you can imagine, that has gotten worse as now more people are working remotely, requiring quality internet. This shows that quality internet also affects home values and the ability to sell your home. I have read that a home with good internet, increases the value of the home by up to \$10,000. Again I am currently working with a couple that will not even look at a home unless it has high-speed internet as the wife works from home.

We are "empty nesters" so we have no children living at home so I cannot speak to it, but I'm assuming it would have been very difficult with 2-3 kids trying to learn remotely with the internet access we have.



**Steve Johnson, Realtor**

**Coldwell Banker River Valley, REALTORS**

304 Main Street | Black River Falls, WI 54615

Office 715.284.9055 | Cell 715-829-0404

[sjohnson@cbrivervalley.com](mailto:sjohnson@cbrivervalley.com) | [www.sjohnson.cbrivervalley.com](http://www.sjohnson.cbrivervalley.com)



MaryAnn Lippert &lt;jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com&gt;

---

**Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project**

1 message

**Veronica Price** <vee@norgaardagency.com>

Fri, Mar 4, 2022 at 1:43 PM

To: "jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com" &lt;jacksoncountybroadband@gmail.com&gt;

Hello,

We are in TOTAL SUPPORT of securing grant funding in support of Bug Tussle Wireless securing finances to finish the middle mile bringing broadband to our rural area for both work, as well as at my home. Please allow this request, as we have kids that cannot complete homework without setting in Walmart Parking lot. WE NEED THIS! Thank you! ~Vee

Veronica Price - Commercial Lines Manager

Norgaard Agency Inc.

P.O. Box 29

Black River Falls, WI 54615

715-284-5115

[Please leave us a Google Review - click here!](#)

-

Confidential Notice:

The information contained in this communication, including all attachments, is legally protected information, confidential or proprietary information, or a trade secret intended solely for the use of the intended recipient. The information may also be subject to legal privilege. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any use, disclosure, dissemination, distribution, forwarding, or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify the sender by reply Fax or email stating the communication was "received in error: and delete or destroy all copies of this communication, including all attachments. **Please be advised that insurance coverage is not bound, altered, or amended until it has been confirmed by a licensed representative of Norgaard Agency, Inc.**





March 04, 2022

**Subject:** Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the proposed Jackson County Broadband Expansion Project. Business success and growth is dependent on reliable and affordable internet service, as it allows us to complete nearly all aspects of operations.

We are in the business of sales and service of tooling for the woodworking industry. An internet presence is essential to compete in this market, as well as to provide fast service to our customers. Our customers are nationwide as well as international. We are the only tooling manufacturer's to offer 24 hour service which is only possible through the use of the internet. Drawings, pictures, and prints need to be quickly & accurately received for processing.

We are located in an area with little to no cell service, so right now our only option is satellite wi-fi. We use Viasat with 12 mbps speeds (40gb of data monthly).

For these reasons, it is critical that our area of Jackson County upgrades to true broadband service

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-662-2015 or at [info@woodworkerstoolworks.com](mailto:info@woodworkerstoolworks.com)

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

***Robert Knourek, Jr.***

Robert Knourek, Jr.

President

AKB Tooling, Inc.

Dbas: Woodworkers' Tool Works

N4299 Lien Rd

Melrose, WI 54642